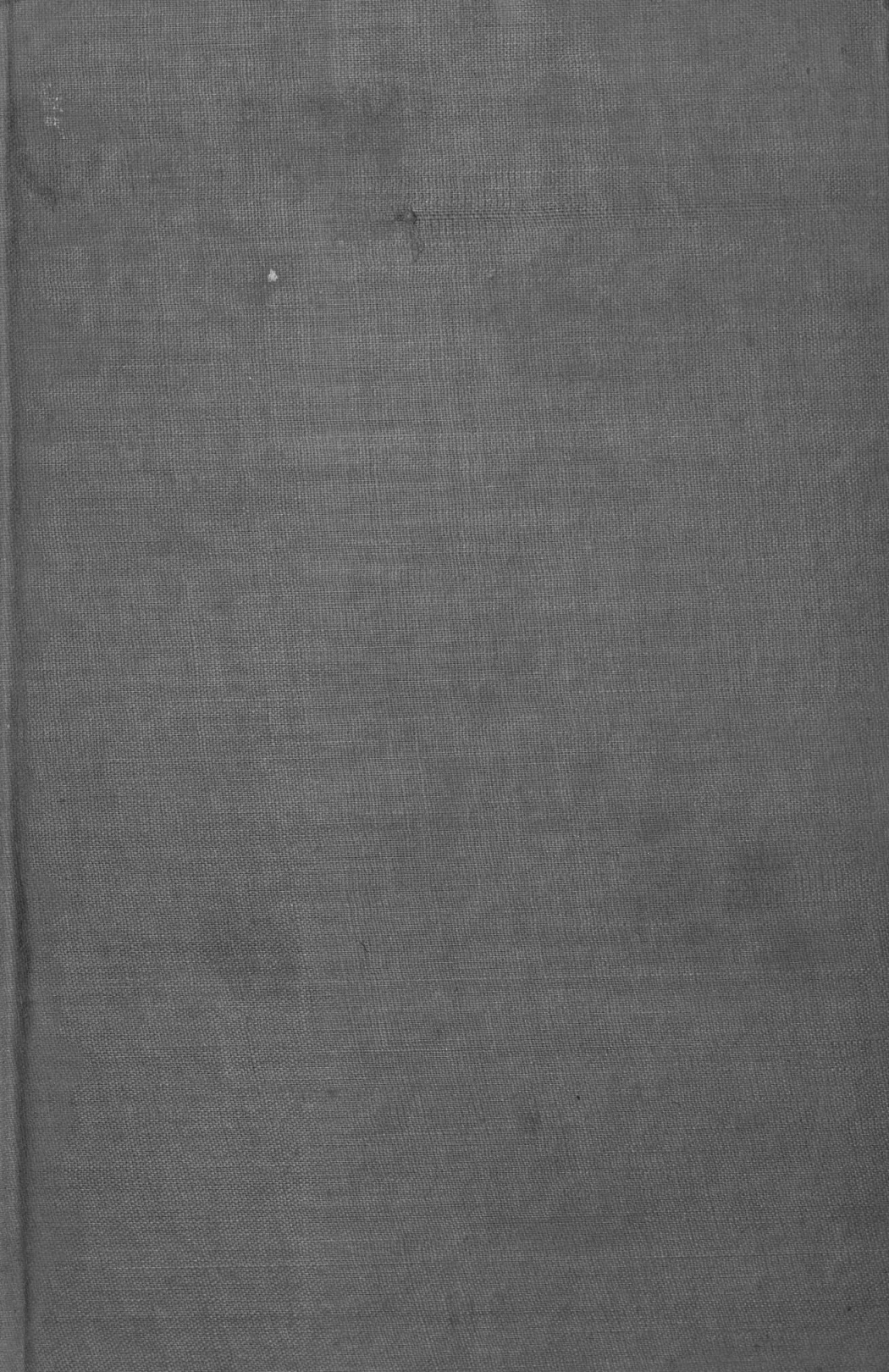




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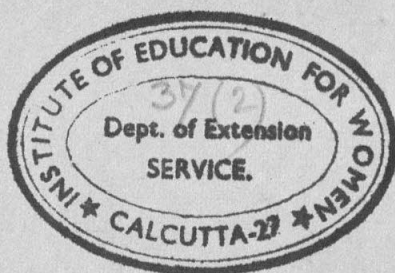


PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

by

K. G. SAIYIDAIN

Education Secretary
Government of India

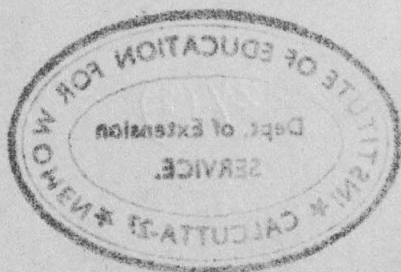


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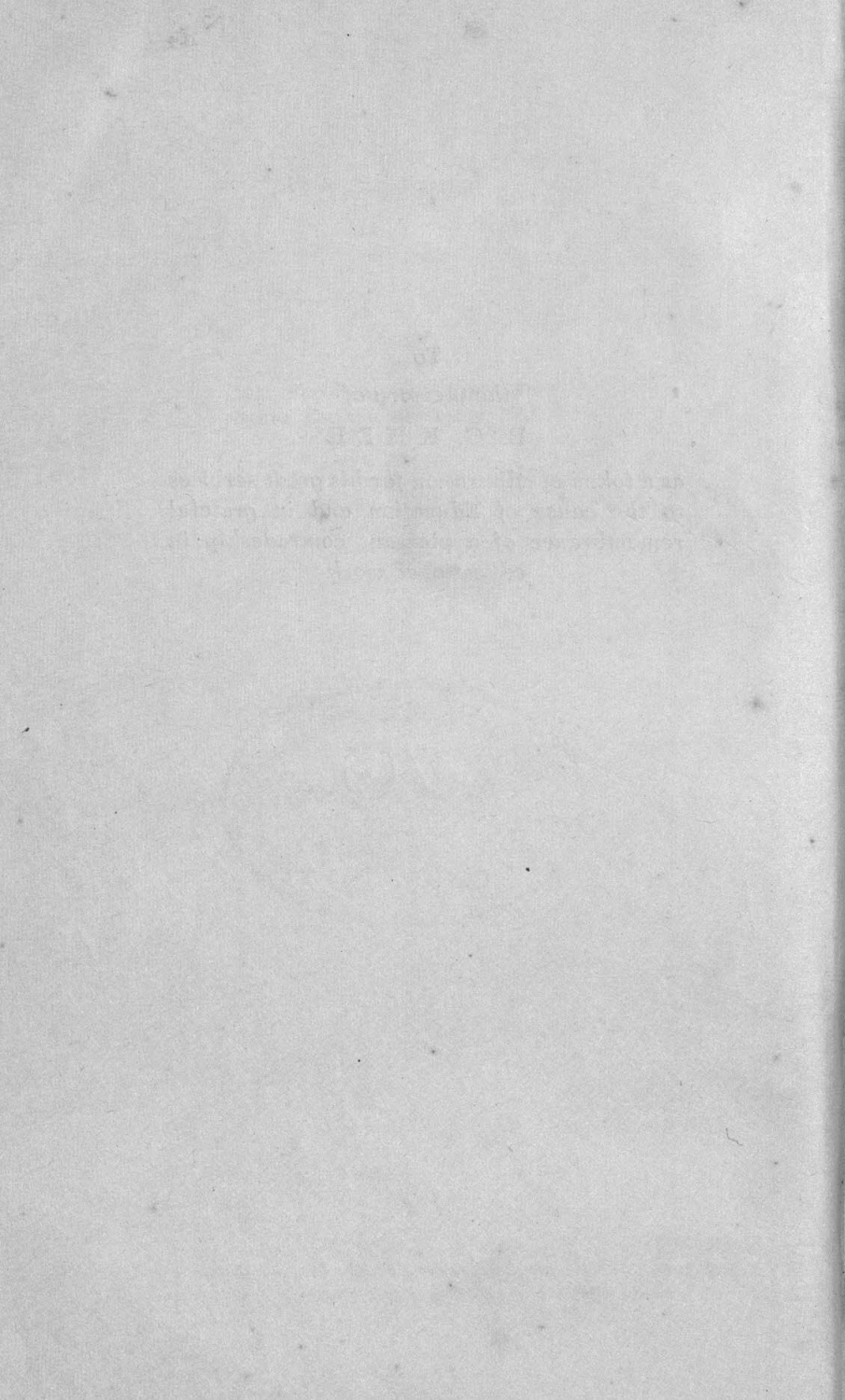
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To
the memory of
B. G. K H E R

as a token of admiration for his great services
to the cause of Education and in grateful
remembrance of a pleasant comradeship in
educational work



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INTRODUCTION

MANY years ago, before the shadow of the Second World War had actually lengthened over this generation, I had published a collection of my educational essays under the title of "The School of the Future". Its first part dealt mainly with an elucidation of the principles of the "New Education" in their application to the school and attempted to show how the school environment could be reorganized so as to strengthen the individuality and cultivate the innate capacities of the children in an atmosphere of freedom. In the second part, I had discussed certain aspects of Higher Education, including some problems pertaining to the training of teachers.

During the intervening years, I have been actively associated with educational work—on the teaching as well as administrative side—and the conviction has grown upon me, with increasing force, that the building up of the "School of the Future" is something much bigger and more fundamental than the re-furnishing, as it were, of the school interior materially and psychologically. While I still advocate, without any mental reservation, the basic principles which I had then expounded for the creative education of the child's individuality, I realize with much greater poignancy today that the school is an integral part of the total social environment and the child's individuality is not nurtured in school only but is greatly influenced by the total set-up of our socio-economic system and by contemporary ideological currents. As I try to probe a little more deeply into the educational problems that I have been teaching and discussing or considering from the practical point of view, I find many walls crumbling—walls that have traditionally appeared to divide education from politics, from economics, from social controversies, from the many implications of modern scientific developments. I see the ramifications of the teacher's work

going farther and farther into many other domains of life and the impact of work being done in other fields being felt by the teacher in his special province. And the conviction comes home to me that educational reform is, so to speak, more than educational reform—it is also social reform and reconstruction in the widest sense of the word.

It occurred to me, therefore, that it might perhaps be worthwhile to re-present some outstanding problems of educational reconstruction in this wider setting. This is also called for in view of the far-reaching political and other changes that we have gone through during the last ten years—changes which have given a new orientation and a new urgency to our educational situation. In this book, which is meant primarily for teachers but is addressed to all who may have an intelligent interest in the healthy direction of our educational future, I have retained—with considerable revision but without radical changes—Part I of the “School of the Future” which deals with principles in accordance with which we can build schools worthy of our national ideals and in harmony with progressive educational thought. In Part II, I have discussed, under the general heading of “New Trends and Approaches”, a number of problems pertaining to Primary and Rural Education, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Social Education, etc. It seems to me that, whatever aspect or stage of education we take up for consideration, there are so many new and exciting things to be done, so many defects to be set right that, for a conscientious, intelligent and contented teacher, there should be not a single *dull* moment in his working day. Anxious moments, yes; exacting responsibilities, certainly; also discouragements—but *not* dullness which is associated with work that is devoid of intelligence, interest and exciting possibilities.

I have stipulated above three rather difficult conditions which the teacher should satisfy, if he is to escape the deadly disease of dullness—he should be *intelligent*, *conscientious* and *contented*. And these are qualities not commonly found in teachers and rarely found in combination! If, however, the quality of teaching and the status of the teaching profes-

sion are to be raised, it is essential that an increasing number of teachers should cultivate a broader and keener awareness of the possibilities inherent in their work, should cultivate a sense of duty and devotion towards it and should be enabled to live reasonably contented and satisfying lives. The first two conditions depend mainly on the teachers themselves and the type of professional education that is provided for them; and the third is largely a function of the social and economic deal which society metes out to them. In view of these considerations, I have devoted Part III of the book to problems relating to the Education of Teachers—not only their technical and professional training but also the general education of their minds, their attitudes and their personality and the vexed question of their socio-economic relationship to society. If their general and professional training is efficient and satisfactory, they will perform their duties intelligently; if the schools and colleges have succeeded in instilling the right *values* in them, they will be conscientious, and if Society and the State have given them a fair deal and assured to them the status that they deserve, they will be contented. It is only when all these conditions are satisfied that we can look forward with any confidence to a progressive improvement of our educational system. It is a commonplace observation but it needs reiteration that the teacher holds the key position in the educational domain and anything that improves his efficiency and his sense of satisfaction in his work will be repaid a hundredfold.

K. G. SAIYIDAIN

PART ONE

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

(Building the School of the Future)

THE

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

OF THE

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND

I PROPOSE to devote the first part of this book to discussing the principles and sketching the portrait of the 'school of the future'—the school, not as it is, but as it can be if devotion and intelligence and understanding are brought to its service. (The ordinary Indian school, as we know it today, has obviously failed to exploit most of what is worthy and valuable in the nature of youth; it has failed to tap the sources of their creative energies and to release them into fruitful channels. These schools are usually places where formal training is provided in certain technical skills like reading, writing and drawing, or certain prescribed subjects of study like history, geography and science. At the worst, they are instruments for killing the spirit of joy, initiative and love of work in children. I believe it was Mr. H. G. Wells who had said somewhere—and he was by no means a pessimistic person: "If you want to feel the generations rushing to waste like rapids—like rapids—you should put your heart and mind into a private school.") This is certainly not applicable to the present-day schools of England, many of which have shown a remarkable vitality and an awakening to modern needs and ideas. But it is true of the large majority of our own schools, whether public or private. In making this remark, with a full appreciation of its strong implications, I do not mean to disparage the work of many teachers who, according to their own lights, have been giving of their best to the service of education. Nor am I unmindful of the changes that have occurred in recent years in schools, particularly through the scheme of Basic Education and the reconstruction of Secondary Schools which is being attempted on the basis of the recommendations made by the Mudaliar Commission. But their number is small and, unfortunately, this cannot by itself create an educational revolution. Teachers must be inspired by a true

appreciation of educational aims and an intelligent understanding of ways and means for their implementation. This is what even the best of our teachers often lack—to say nothing of the large majority who have neither the training nor the inclination to put their heart into their work. Practising teachers, teachers in training and others who are interested in education as an instrument for improving the quality of social and individual life must, therefore, seriously address themselves to the task of laying the foundations of a better, a more vitalized, a more life-giving school, the School of the Future, which will take the place of the existing mockery of what a school should—and could—really be.

Before drawing in outline the shape of this school as I visualize it, it is necessary to get a grip on the serious and concrete defects of the present educational system. If we can correctly understand its fundamental social and psychological shortcomings, half the battle will be won and the way will be clear for making the necessary reforms. There has been much waste of energy in the past because of our failure to diagnose the situation correctly. Till comparatively recently, well-meaning people had been content to advocate this or that reform in the machinery of administration or in the curriculum or in methods and the official guardians of education had been mainly preoccupied with what may be described as the 'mechanics' of education—the compilation of annual statistics, the preparation of records, the allocation of scanty funds to growing needs. This tendency is still not quite dead, as public discussion of education by ill-informed persons often illustrates. A little 'science', or what passes as such, and some drawing or handicrafts have been tacked on to the curriculum; grudgingly, the medium of instruction in schools has been gradually changed; second languages have been introduced now a couple of years earlier, now later. Such piecemeal, uncoordinated efforts do not touch the root of the matter at all; they are rather like fighting with shadows which may possibly give one a feeling of satisfaction but does not eradicate the basic defects. What is urgently required is a correct appraisal of the educational situation with reference to the

national needs and ideals and a courageous attempt to bring about a radical transformation of the methods and organization as well as the ideas and principles underlying educational policy. Such an appraisal, if it is to be exhaustive and to cover all the relevant features, would require volumes; it is, therefore, beyond the scope of this book. I shall content myself with demonstrating the shortcomings of the educational system by choosing as it were a few outstanding features of an expansive landscape and attempting to show their bearings on the situation as a whole.

(Education is an activity which is concerned both with the individual and with society or rather with the individual-in-society.) Every system of education must, therefore, be judged by this criterion—does it foster the development of individuality and, in that process, manage to adjust the individual adequately to his growing social environment? To put the same thing in more concrete terms, do our schools succeed in bringing out all that is best and unique in the children? Do they provide facilities and opportunities for their special gifts and strong natural urges to develop so that they might, at a later date, be pressed into the service of social ends? Do they adjust the Indian student to his environment—the social, economic and cultural milieu in which he has to live and from which he must derive the special colour and texture of his life-activities? Let us take these two important criteria of judgment one by one.

Anyone, who is even superficially conversant with the working of our schools and the mental equipment of their scholars, can clearly see that they are often so organized as to *militate* against the development of individuality. I use that strong word advisedly, for it is not that they merely fail to bring out the uniqueness and possibilities in each individual child—that would be largely true of many schools in other countries as well. By their methods of teaching and learning and discipline, they actively *suppress* individuality and let children's distinctive gifts die of inanition and disuse. They are responsible for the heartless, if unwitting, waste of the fine human potentialities implicit in their pupils. I have had

opportunities of mixing fairly, intimately with many English students and forming an estimate of their capacities and have also met students of other nationalities and I can say, without any national egotism, that the average Indian student is *not* inferior to the average student of any other country so far as his natural gifts and capacities, both intellectual and practical, are concerned. In some respects, he may even be superior because of his rich racial and cultural heritage. In the above remark I have made a reservation: "so far as his natural gifts and capacities are concerned." This proviso must be carefully understood for, in actual fact, we find that after a period of schooling—say at the age of about fourteen—the Indian student has less energy, less resourcefulness, less initiative, less breadth of interests and a weaker consciousness of self and of community ties than his fellows in other countries. I am convinced, however, that, under favourable circumstances and a proper system of education, we could turn out from our schools young men and women of great promise and marked individuality who could hold their own, practically and culturally, against the youth of any other country. Even today there are in India men of outstanding individuality who have made their mark in almost every walk of life—men who have few equals and hardly any superiors in the whole world. Some of them are people who have never come within the grind-mill of the educational system; others have been able to withstand the repressive influence of schools and colleges and to retain their originality and their strength of character. What could we not achieve if life were not cramped and restricted from all sides, if schools were so organized as to release rather than imprison the creative impulses of life! For, in the words of the poet, Iqbal:

بندگی میں گھٹ کے رہ جاتی ہے اک جوئے کم آب
اور آزادی میں بحرِ بیکراں ہے زندگی

*Fettered and cramped, life is like a little, sluggish rivulet;
Free, it becomes the boundless ocean!*

How do we manage to restrict and cramp the life of children in schools? Let me indicate a few outstanding causes. In the first place, the uniformity of method, the rigidity of curriculum and the narrow outlook of our schools deny individual children the chance to express themselves in congenial ways. There is no recognition or appreciation of psychological types. Children are herded into a dull, bookish and passive school environment at a time when all the forces of their being demand that they should be playing actively and working joyously in the open air. I am referring here, of course, to children who are 'fortunate' enough to be sent to schools—the large majority are deprived of that privilege altogether! These children at school have to undergo the trying ordeal of hours of drudgery, of uninteresting book learning, the meaning and purpose of which is usually beyond their understanding. There is often no provision for those creative and constructive activities, manual and mental, which give room for the expression of the children's individual talents. Often even in Basic Schools, manual work deteriorates into drudgery. Without joyful activity, without interest or curiosity or the pleasant sense of being preoccupied with a self-chosen task, the school becomes a veritable prison house for the children—a prison house whose "shades begin to close upon the growing boy", as the years roll on. And obviously no prison can evoke the best potentialities in its inmates! To this childhood without joy, succeeds adolescence which has not developed any marked and differentiated interests. In the secondary schools, too, boys (and girls) are expected to follow passively and mechanically the same monotonous round of theoretical studies which allow little room for personal choice or preference. Ordinarily, the available options are whether one will study Arabic or Persian or Sanskrit and take up Science or Drawing. It is only recently that, in the Secondary School Examination in some States, a large number of new subjects have been included as possible options. But the choice allowed is largely theoretical because there are few schools where arrangements exist for teaching anything more than the common traditional subjects. (A healthy change is, however, being envisaged in

the new multipurpose schools that are being now established, providing a curriculum of core subjects as well as different vocational courses organized as options.)

Adolescence sets in with its undeniable craving for reality, for definite, concrete work and its growing interest in art and poetry and literature and social service and other impulses which can inspire generous thoughts and emotions. But the school goes on unconcernedly with its deadly monotony of tame, academic work. It pays little heed to the future vocations of the children who drift aimlessly from one year to the next. The educative resources implicit in arts, crafts, industry, agriculture and other major activities of the human race are not exploited at all in the ordinary schools and the youths are trained as if practically all of them were destined to become office clerks! Little wonder then that, under the stress of economic forces, this actually becomes the ambition of the large majority and their varied gifts, which might have been developed and utilized in other fields of activity to the enrichment of national life, become atrophied for want of use and they either 'succeed' in securing some work in offices or drift into some other uncongenial employment in which they can find a footing. Not that there is anything intrinsically objectionable or disgraceful in office work or clerical occupations. (But when a whole nation is being educated consciously or unconsciously for that narrow end, it is idle to hope for any marked individuality amongst the students.) Indian education has for long made the mistake of hitching its wagon not to the star of any ideal but to the street-lamp of earning a miserable livelihood and the consequences of this lowering of the ideal are visible in every aspect of our national life. (We have now become acutely conscious of this mistake but the price of a century of misdirection will have to be paid over a number of years, till inertia can be broken and new attitudes and techniques are built up in teachers and parents.)

Do we fare any better if our education is viewed from the social point of view, i.e. as a means of adjusting the student to the social, economic and cultural environment in which

he will have to pass his life? (Here the failure of the present school system is implicit in its historical origin.) How can the school harmonize the child with his surroundings and give him an insight into his social and cultural heritage when, in its aims and ideals, as well as its methods, curriculum and organization it has not sought inspiration from Indian culture or social ideals but has been content to copy the outmoded educational ideas and institutions of a foreign land? How can it unlock for him either the external world around or the inner world of his own intellectual and emotional interests when, for decades, even the medium of his instruction has not been his mother-tongue? Beset with these formidable handicaps and lacking a genuine appreciation of the intimate relationship between life and education, the school has lost that dynamic contact with the complex and varied life around it which alone can give meaning and direction to its teaching activities. It has withdrawn into the seclusion of an artificial world of its own. The child who passes the school portal and enters into this artificial world, say at the age of five or six, and remains there till he is seventeen or eighteen, is apt to lose all contact with outside life during this period. When he emerges from this world, without having acquired living and vital experiences, he is naturally unable to fit into the existing scheme of things and cannot plant his feet firmly and confidently on the ground. Like a prisoner kept too long in the darkness of his cell, he feels out of his element in the bustle and noise and the broad daylight of the outside world. (The transition is too abrupt for him; he fails to discover continuity of motives, purposes and relationships between the two worlds. Even when, after some years, he settles down to his work in life, he does not feel quite at ease with himself or at peace with his surroundings. There is a lurking sense of something being incomplete and wanting, because the break between the 'school world' and the 'real world' has been too abrupt and disturbing for his mental equilibrium and intellectual habits. He finds it necessary to unlearn many of the habits and attitudes which he had acquired at school because they do not 'work' in his new environment. Thus the school

actually becomes a hindrance and a handicap to the process of adjustment instead of being a help to it.

I hope I have not over-drawn the picture or exaggerated its defective features for the sake of effect. It is confirmed by our everyday observations and experiences. Let us choose, by way of illustration, the case of a promising village lad whose parents are engaged in some useful occupation like farming or weaving. They have their definite function in the life of their community; their work is humble but honourable and it gives them a certain assured status in their local society. If, through economy and self-denial, they manage to send their boy to the village school and subsequently to the neighbouring town school, they have certainly the right to expect that the school will throw open to him better chances in life than they have themselves had. What is it that actually happens? After years of patient self-sacrifice and fond hopes, the boy returns to the village, lucky if he has not fallen by the roadside and has managed to pass, say, the Matriculation Examination. On his return this 'educated' young man discovers—what he had perhaps already suspected—that he is no longer fitted, either by training or inclination, for the economy of village life. His little knowledge—fragments of disconnected, ill-organized information about miscellaneous things—gives him a false sense of his own importance. His school training, which has lacked the educative element of hard, honest manual work, gives him a perverted sense of values. He often begins to look upon the work of his father and other villagers with distaste, if not actual contempt. His thoughts and dreams no longer hover round the plough and the spinning wheel, two of the most valuable instruments of human civilization; they begin to turn more and more towards the office-stool and the ledger! I am not concerned here with arguing the superiority of the one over the other. The obstinate, indisputable fact is that the clerical departments cannot possibly absorb and accommodate all those who aspire to them and the economy of national life demands that there should be an adequate number of educated, willing and competent men for doing the various forms of manual work which are necessary. The

result is that this young man, the hope of his poor family, wastes another few years in his fruitless search for a 'job' and, during this period, he is exposed to all those humiliations and undesirable influences which are incidental to this business and which effectively undermine a person's self-confidence and self-respect. Ultimately he either 'settles down' as an ill-paid, subordinate employee in some office, engaged in some kind of monotonous, soulless routine, or is compelled to fall back upon the work of his father—but with very bad grace. Having passed through all these bitter, unpleasant experiences which pervert one's normal sense of values, he can rarely bring to his work that wholehearted devotion and attachment which impart the dignity of creative activity even to the humblest of occupations and bring in their train a sense of personal enrichment and expansion. He remains a 'misfit' all through his life and it is this tragedy of the misfit, this thrusting of square pegs in round holes which is responsible for so much unrest and misery in our present world—the haunting sense of frustration, of something being missing, incomplete or misplaced.

(Thus we begin to see how and where the school has failed in the discharge of its social responsibility. It has succeeded neither in developing the individuality of its children nor in making them feel at home in, and fruitfully adjusted to, their special environment. It has tended to emphasize wrong objectives and values like book-learning and competitive success and ignored the more important and basic values and purposes. By devoting itself exclusively to imparting book-knowledge and failing to take note of the educative value and dignity of labour in its numerous forms, it has led to the overcrowding of educated people in a few limited lines to the comparative neglect of others. Thus, whether we view it from the point of view of the individual or of society as a whole, we are driven to the uncomfortable conclusion that the school, as a social and educative institution, is not delivering the goods.)

There is still another direction in which the wrong orientation of our school system has done incalculable damage—in

the domain of cultural interpretation. It is the business of the school—as educationists have recognized in all ages—to function as an agency for the transmission and interpretation of national culture to the generation growing up within its four walls. But our system of education has not been based in the past decades on the broad foundations of national culture and does not derive its inspiration from the achievements of its past or the preoccupations of its present or the hopes of its future. The result of this unfortunate rift between the school and the sources of national culture has been the growing estrangement of the younger generation from their heritage of literature, philosophy, morality and religion. They have tended to turn instead to foreign sources of inspiration which, though good in themselves and valuable in their own place, can never have the same meaning and significance for them. It is a strange irony that, in our schools and colleges, young men and women study Shakespeare and Milton and are ignorant of their own literary giants, that for the study of Philosophy they turn to Plato and Aristotle and Kant and Berkeley, forgetting that India has been for ages the home of a philosophy which has been the subject of reverent study by western scholars, and that the various races and communities living here have made valuable contributions to this precious heritage. It is not out of a narrow-minded ‘nationalism’ that I take this point of view—for knowledge is blind to national boundaries and is the property of the whole human race.* The reason why we must give greater importance to indigenous culture in our national education is deeply embedded in human psychology. The culture and thought of a country can yield their full import and significance only to those who have been nourished in its soil and whose minds and emotions have, consciously as well as unconsciously, assimilated its characteristic spirit and life-forms. Where the industrious Indian student will laboriously pick his way through the labyrinths of English literature or philosophy, the English student

* *Vide* a well known tradition of the Prophet of Islam: “All knowledge is the lost property of the believer; wherever he finds it, he is entitled to it.”

will normally do so easily and congenially. But the same Indian student will show greater intellectual kenness and self-confidence if his mind is nurtured in his own literary traditions and trained through knowledge that is historically and psychologically congenial to him. (Modern psychology of learning and mental development has greatly reinforced this faith in the intimacy of relationship between the activities—intellectual and practical—of the individual and those of the group or the community. I cannot do better than quote, with approval, what Dr. Hilda Taba, a keen educational psychologist, has said on the subject:

“At no time in recent history have we had more strongly impressed on us the futility of individual activity that is out of step with, and not supported by, our collective culture. Never has the dependence of the patterns and purposes of individual conduct on collective ones been more forcefully proved by scientific research and practical experience.”*

We shall discuss later the implications of this psychological doctrine for educational organization: Here we have only to note the fact that the school is culturally ineffective because its activities and progress are ‘out of place’ with our collective culture and it tends to deaden the youthful mind by thrusting foreign material on it before it has drawn nourishment and inspiration from its own cultural sources.

(This had been the position for many weary decades till recently.) Since the achievement of freedom and, in some circles earlier still, there has developed another tendency which is equally dangerous—a kind of blind ‘revivalism’ which interprets culture—and consequently education—in narrow terms, and is apt to equate Indian culture with ancient culture, ignoring or actively trying to liquidate the rich contributions made to it during the medieval and modern periods. Such a reactionary approach is fatal to the development of a living and progressive culture and a truly national or human

* Taba: “Progressive Education—What Now?” (in *Progressive Education*, March 1934).

outlook. (Indian education must guard itself against this danger which has recently been assuming alarming proportions.)

What, one might ask, can the poor teachers do under these circumstances? Their conditions of work are far from being congenial to fruitful effort in the direction of reform. It is *not* that the whole profession is indifferent to the demands of the situation or is unable to appreciate its significance. In some places, e.g. in small one-teacher primary schools of Kashmir, I have occasionally come across conscientious, resourceful teachers who did remarkably good work under very adverse conditions. But a majority of them have neither the innate capacity nor the training to translate into practice their good intentions—where they have them at all! They often lack the necessary knowledge and, even more so, the capacity to transmute their knowledge into dynamic action. In rare cases where initiative is allied to an intelligent understanding, they are so overwhelmed by the weight of the hidebound system that they beat their wings helplessly against the iron bars of their cage. The newly-trained teacher may, and does, sometimes, enter upon his work with high ideals and hopeful enthusiasm; but the general indifference, ignorance and red-tape soon hold him in their cold, unrelaxing grip. Most of the private schools are unfortunately no better in this respect—and are sometimes worse—than the State schools. Many of them are conducted either by profiteers or by ignorant, self-complacent and unimaginative ‘philanthropists’ who insist on imposing their own stupid ideas on the teachers and who deny to the latter that freedom and respect without which spontaneous and creative endeavour is impossible. So most schools look with disfavour and suspicion on all innovations, on efforts to liberate the children from the thralldom of that mechanical teaching and discipline which kills joyful, creative activity. They would rather have the teacher mark registers, collect fees and conduct futile examinations every week than see him take the children out on an excursion and play with them joyfully in the open air and sunshine. Thus, working with inner as well as outer inhibitions, he soon finds himself

disillusioned and discouraged and, after a short struggle, settles down into a tame pedagogue of the traditional type! To repeat the question raised above: what can the teachers do under these circumstances? I propose to discuss in the course of the following chapters, in the light of the above survey, the main lines on which school reorganization is possible and should be attempted in India.

Chapter II

THE SCHOOL IS AN ACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

IN trying to present a picture of the School of the Future, one is embarrassed by the very plenitude of the material available. During the last fifty years, many 'new schools' have come into being and many educational experiments have been tried in other countries and it is the business of a writer, who seeks to predict the future, to work out the general import and implications of these progressive schools for the reorganization of education. Everyone of the more significant of these experiments has something valuable to suggest; it is a finger pointing towards some important feature of the better school that is in the making. It would be a fascinating inquiry to discover and discuss the distinctive features of the many 'new schools' that have been established in different countries under the stimulus of new educational ideas. But that will take us far out of our field and, in any case, there is considerable literature dealing with progressive education in western countries. I would, therefore, concentrate my attention on a few of the more significant features and ideas that they have in *common*, because it is out of these that we shall find emerging the composite picture of our school of the future.

What, in the first place, are the outstanding differences between the 'new' school and the traditional school as it exists today? It differs from the traditional school both in its attitude towards the child and its attitude towards the world of everyday affairs and problems. It attaches great value to the freedom of the child and takes its stand on indisputable psychological evidence. It is inspired by the faith that a child's development can be secured only if his native powers and capacities are given free play to interact fruitfully with his environment. It does not visualize its work as consisting in a constant repression of the child's energies and activities in all

directions except scholastic learning. Its attempt is to provide for the child an environment that is as rich and active and joyous as possible—with opportunities for play, social co-operation, manual work, creative and constructive activities, study of spontaneously chosen books and subjects—and, when the environment has been planned, to let the child participate fully in its manifold activities which are congenial to his age and interests. It is by living, here and now, a life that is worthwhile and immediately satisfying and meaningful that the child can be best prepared for his duties and functions as an adult. This attitude demands a genuine faith on the part of the teacher that the natural impulses of the child are the chief instrument and raw material of his education. Education is not synonymous with the pouring in of ready-made knowledge; it is rather the disciplining, the organization and the co-ordination of his powers and capacities towards valuable and significant ends. The essence of modern teaching, on the intellectual side, is to give the child a mastery over the tools of learning and a lively curiosity and hunger for the acquisition of knowledge. For, scientific knowledge has grown so remarkably and rapidly during the last two centuries that no education, however thorough and prolonged, can expect to make the pupil a master of all or even a considerable part of the available learning. Instead, therefore, of giving him a superficial acquaintance with many scattered and disconnected topics, it is more useful to deal thoroughly and leisurely with a small number of significant experiences, making him master the instruments of learning incidentally and purposefully and whetting his intellectual appetite all the time. Thus the modern, 'progressive' school seeks to replace information by experience and chooses the most significant and abiding aspects of experience for its subject-matter and thereby makes school life active and meaningful. We shall discuss the implications of this conception of school work presently.

The new schools also differ in their attitude to the outside world. The traditional conception of a school has been too academic and monastic—it has been treated as a place which should be effectively cut off from the wear and tear and the

work and worry of everyday life. It carried on its teaching activities in an academic seclusion, out of touch with the social and economic life surging around. The modern sociological view of education postulates that the school should constantly draw upon social life and activities for its subject-matter, its methods of teaching and its motives of work. There must be a conscious and continuous intercourse, a free give-and-take, between the little world of the school and the bigger world outside. Children should be given chances of actual participation in social service, in municipal functions, in health campaigns and other public activities possessing educative significance and thus learn through practice the lessons of service and co-operation. Otherwise, the divorce between school and life will make teaching artificial, lacking in significant content and a sense of reality, and children will not be able to carry over into the conduct of their daily life the fruits of their school learning and culture.

These two guiding principles of the new school movement furnish us with a conception of the school which differs from the existing conception in several important respects. It requires a re-interpretation, if not a thorough overhauling, of school objectives, a replanning of its curriculum and methods and a reorganization of its internal life and discipline as well as its relationship with the life of the community. Let us examine these demands in some detail.

The schools are generally preoccupied at present with one narrow but clear-cut problem—how to prepare their pupils to pass certain examinations which have been prescribed by the inscrutable wisdom of educational authorities. Generally speaking, all that furthers this end is welcomed and encouraged; all that does not directly bear on it is either actively discouraged or looked upon as irrelevant. Sometimes, thanks to the natural cravings of child nature, social life and activities spring up in the small world of the school, e.g. in many schools, games and sports have become fashionable. But they are often looked upon as outside the regular work of the school and teachers of the orthodox type do not welcome or utilize them for general educational ends. Their narrow vision does

not go beyond the formal, scholastic requirements. As against this view, the new school seeks, primarily and above all, "to give life to its pupils and to give it abundantly". Learning will surely have its place in it but mainly as an instrument for the enrichment of children's life and interests, i.e. it will be subordinated to the ends of full, happy and vigorous living. This is obviously a radical departure from the view which has interpreted education as a *preparation* for the child's future life as an adult, to the stern demands of which his present needs and interests must be sacrificed! It postulates, on the other hand, that the children should actively *participate* here and now in school life that is intrinsically valuable and pleasure-giving to them, exercising all their healthy, natural powers of action, co-operation and self-expression in various ways. Learning of subjects and mastery of the technical tools of knowledge must be relegated to their subordinate position—as aids in the activities of an expanding life, as necessary to broaden the pupil's sphere of vision and interests and control. They must be acquired not as ends in themselves but as by-products in the pursuit of shared activities which appeal to them on their own account. This shifting of the emphasis from the future to the present, from adult needs and motives to child needs and motives involves a veritable educational revolution. Instead of laying out beforehand plans of what the child is to be and to do and what learning and skills are to be taught to him—that is, casting him in a preconceived mould—the school must recognize that every child is a unique and vigorous individual who has to be consulted, as it were, about his own future and allowed to shape his own course of development under tactful and understanding guidance. Otherwise, he is apt to kick against all external restrictions and resist efforts made to promote his growth. Hence, the need for the teachers of the new school to study carefully his stages of growth, the developing phases of his interest, and the activities and characteristics associated with each. Without a knowledge of, and sensitiveness to, these he is in danger of building his school education on foundations of shifting sand.

In support of the view of the school presented above, I shall quote the opinions of two educational authorities, one English and the other American, both of whom have greatly influenced modern educational ideas and practices. Dr. Nunn, who was Professor of Education in the London University, has stated clearly:

"The school must be thought of primarily *not* as a place of learning where certain knowledge is learnt but as a place where the young are disciplined in certain forms of activity—namely, those that are of the greatest and most permanent significance in the wider world." *

Professor Dewey, America's leading educational philosopher, has presented in his writings a complete and unified picture of the school, as he conceives it, in constant and dynamic contact with social life.† To him the school is a 'special environment' where a certain quality of life and certain types of activities and occupations are provided with the object of securing children's development along desirable lines. He mentions three main characteristics of this school environment to which a reference may usefully be made. The first characteristic is that it provides a *simplified* environment where such factors—out of the complex and intricate modern life—are selected as have an abiding and fundamental significance and are intelligible and interesting enough to evoke response from the children. Having selected out of all the activities and institutions that sustain civilized life—business, politics, art, science, literature, religion, etc.—what is simple and fundamental, the school presents it to the young in an orderly manner and thus gradually gives them an insight into the meaning of their apparently chaotic world.

The second function of the school environment is to *eliminate* what is unworthy or ugly in social life outside and mirror only that which is valuable and educative, so that it becomes, for the children, a replica of the better and cleaner society that

* *Education—Its Data and First Principles.*

† *Democracy and Education.*

is yet to be. By eschewing whatever is trivial or perverse or mere deadweight from the past and by providing for the children a purified and selective medium of action, the school can become a nucleus of progress and better living. Thus, while it would certainly reflect within it the world outside, it would not do so haphazardly and indiscriminately; it would avoid the introduction of baser motives and purposes and perverted social relationships which corrupt and deform adult society.

Thirdly, the school must perform the function of *balancing* the various factors and elements of the social environment, of establishing rich and varied contacts between individuals and groups and of co-ordinating the interests and loyalties of the young which are subject to pulls from many, and often conflicting, directions. If the school does not take upon itself the duty of harmonizing and ordering into a hierarchy the various demands which modern life makes on the young, they will not be able to build up either the unity of their personality or the stability of their character.

Thus the features of the new school begin to emerge—if still rather vaguely and in bald outline. It is a centre of vigorous life, not of anaemic learning; it provides different types of activities for its children and values fullness of life and joy above scholastic achievements; it is in direct, intimate contact with the realities of the life around, reflecting the best and worthiest of its features which are simple enough to appeal to the child and, by the proper organization and evaluation of its activities, it gives unity of outlook and harmony of loyalties to the personality of the child.

Consistently with this conception of the school, we have to reorganize our everyday methods of teaching in the light of child psychology. A study of his native interests and tendencies reveals that he is naturally and innately interested in *doing* things, taking up various kinds of occupations and putting his own vague ideas and schemes into action. Through construction and the correlated activity of 'destruction', which vexes the adults so much, he seeks to express himself. The two general tendencies of 'physical activity' and 'mental

activity' (as Thorndike calls them) work in very close co-operation during the years of childhood and youth. In the early years, the former is even more important and fundamental than the latter; for, thinking, planning out things, trying alternative ideas and schemes are subordinated to, and carried out through, the medium of physical activity. Knowledge is definitely subordinated to the needs of action, a fact which is reminiscent of how knowledge and science have developed in the course of racial experience. The age of abstract thought and reasoning is not yet come, for the child does not require them as instruments for the solution of his immediate needs and problems. Thus, to begin with, 'four' has no meaning for the child as an abstract numeral; it means four bricks or four chairs or four children. The same concreteness of meaning, the same association of ideas with their applications to actual problems and situations, may be traced in all the mental contents of the child. Qualities like 'sense of duty' or 'gentleness' are real to him only to the extent that they come within his experience in the performance of certain specific duties or in being gentle to one's parents or play-fellows or pets. The same thing applies to his school studies. The study of a book or the mastery of an arithmetical problem is taken up into the child's life and adds to his power only if it bears on his present activities and the interests and situations which engage his attention at home or on the playground. Thus, if the reading of a book or a magazine will satisfy his craving for adventure stories or help him in the construction of a toy aeroplane or give him welcome suggestions regarding his collection of butterflies, he would take it up willingly and devote himself spontaneously to mastering the difficulties incidental to the task. Learning will thus serve the purposes of his everyday life. Similarly, if his arithmetic lessons deal with problems of calculation which arise in the course of his daily living—help him to measure his garden or calculate the cost of whitewashing or keep an account of domestic expenses—arithmetic will take on for him an interest and a fascination that will surprise the bored teachers of the subject. 'Composition' that gives him a chance

to describe his own activities and experiences and encourages keen observation as well as the play of imagination becomes a joyous source of self-expression, a delight communicated to, and shared with, one's fellows. It is no longer lifeless and formal training in writing sentences and mastering the baffling and obstinate intricacies of grammar. It is possible—but hardly necessary—to illustrate the point further with reference to any other school studies.

One might be confronted here with an objection from the orthodox pedant: Are you not lowering the dignity of learning by associating it too directly with, or by subordinating it to, the needs of activity? Will it not sacrifice the great and noble ideal of knowledge to the whims and fancies and transient interests of childhood? Behind that view lies a long history of economic, political and philosophical conflicts in which it is not possible to enter here. It is based on many dualisms of thought which have always exercised the mind of educational philosophers and others. Modern psychology does not concede the validity of the argument. The child is a staunch, unabashed, enthusiastic pragmatist. You may place before him knowledge, learning and truths of the highest value but he is always rather 'impertinently' wondering: what is the good of all this to *me*? How does it help me to work out my plans and occupations better? He will never put his heart into any piece of school work unless he can see its purpose from his own point of view, i.e. whether and in what way it touches upon and enriches his own life. Failing this realization, he remains indifferent, at best half-hearted, towards his studies. The slogan of 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge' or 'art for the sake of art' does not appeal to him. So, whether or not we approve of this natural tendency of the child towards practical activity and his naive utilitarianism, we are compelled to make use of it as an aid to effective teaching. Even from an absolute point of view, however, there can be no reasonable objection against placing life and its noble purposes before the demands of Art or Science. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the motto of the narrow-minded, self-centred scholar who has lost sight of the great universe

by gazing constantly, as it were, at a small crystal. 'Art for the sake of art' is likewise the decadent artist's creed. But teachers have been trapped into the view—partly by forces inherent in the nature of their work and partly by the prestige of scholars and centres of academic learning—and have tried to impose it on the growing and expanding life of children. They have transformed centres of child education into 'book schools' where all that passes as knowledge is at a high premium, while self-activity and self-expression, originality and creativeness, are heavily discounted. The child's values are thus forcibly given a wrong orientation from the very outset. He gets into the habit of looking down upon all useful and constructive work and learns to attach an exaggerated significance to his own half-hearted playing with the symbols of knowledge. The irony of this pedagogical situation is that it does not succeed even in its immediate objective; the school fails to turn out students with scholarly interests or equipment! It turns out eventually to be much ado about nothing—for, knowledge divorced from life remains barren and superficial. It neither awakens interest nor enters into children's life and activities.

What then will be the main characteristics of our school as we have visualized it? In the first place, teaching, especially in the lower classes, will centre round 'occupations', congenial to children and possessing genuine social import. In the pursuit of these occupations, children and youth will be confronted with real life situations and problems demanding their thought and attention. They will need knowledge of different kinds and the help of many people—their parents, teachers and friends—to solve them. The mere fact that the children will personally feel the need for learning some arithmetic or geography or physics will transform their attitude towards such work. They will joyfully put forth their best effort and learn the lesson of self-activity. They will thus start in the right spirit on their adventurous career of picking up useful items of knowledge as they need them for their purposes, but they will, at first, be entirely unconcerned with their formal nomenclature, i.e. it will be immaterial to them whether a

certain body of facts and ideas belongs to history or geography or science. It is only later, with increased knowledge and experience, that the division of knowledge into various specific subjects, each labelled with a name, becomes necessary. The alert, wide-awake teacher will seek tactfully and unobtrusively to co-ordinate and direct into healthy and fruitful channels all the useful knowledge and attitudes acquired by the child during his everyday life, his occasional excursions into the country, his visits to places of historical or geographical interest, his activities in connection with gardening, handwork and games. On this foundation he will build all the later study of geography, history, physics, botany, chemistry, etc. taking care, however, that they are not treated in isolation from the life-activities from which they have taken their origin. They must be taught in close association with practical work suitable to them. Thus geography teaching, for example, will involve frequent excursions and outdoor observation of geographical phenomena. It will also require a geographical museum in which will be available specimens of plants, crops, manufactured articles, stones and what could be obtained of the flora and fauna of the various natural regions of the world. Botany, likewise, will be taught in close connection with actual gardening and observation of, and communion with, living natural phenomena. Specialist teachers will work out the detailed techniques but if the object of education is to impart both knowledge and reverence in accordance with the poet's prayer:

*Let more of knowledge in us grow
And more of reverence in us dwell*

then our method of teaching must link learning to life and give us an appreciative interest in all its forms and activities.

It is possible to suggest similar lines of reorganization for other school subjects to be taught in our 'Active School', a term that is applied by many European and American writers to the new schools working on these principles. Physics and Chemistry and Biology, which have practical applications

will be learnt mainly in workshops and fully equipped laboratories—not the present mimic, doll-house laboratories where children juggle with a few test-tubes and learn how to change the colour of liquids! They will try to reproduce, so far as circumstances permit, actual working conditions in real workshops and laboratories and thus provide for the adolescent student that contact with reality which he intensely craves for at this age.

Such a scheme is obviously costly—there is no gainsaying that objection; but unless we are prepared to spend money on education, we cannot have anything but ‘cheap’ education. In the conditions of modern life and in view of the type of education demanded, we cannot be satisfied with the simple educational equipment of an earlier age when teaching did not require any elaborate or expensive paraphernalia. Being mainly scholastic and theoretical, it was provided by philanthropic scholars to the seekers after knowledge, who came to them, with the help at best of a few books or manuscripts. Modern teaching, to be genuinely effective, requires expenditure of money on the equipment of schools with all that stimulates children’s activity and self-expression. Other countries have tackled the financial problem and made considerable headway in this direction; we cannot afford to remain entrenched behind the persistent excuse of financial difficulties.

Many inspiring accounts of pioneering educational institutions have been published in recent years, more particularly since the first World War. Reference may be made here to two such accounts—one of a Public School in England at Oundle and the other of a ‘New School’ at Bierges in Belgium. The Oundle school had the good fortune to secure, in the early decades of this century, the services of a Headmaster of unusual vision and driving force—Mr. Sanderson. He was responsible for infusing an entirely new spirit into that school which had been nourished till then in the medieval traditions of other Public Schools of England. He reorganized science teaching completely, not only making it more realistic and practical but linking it up intimately with the objectives of a cultural education. He established well-equipped laboratories

and workshops in the school, encouraged creative, constructive and individual work, stimulated boys by his personal enthusiasm and inspiring teaching to undertake co-operative projects and strengthened the 'modern side' of the school beyond recognition. He abolished the hard and fast divisions of subjects and related every lesson to the interests of children and the larger purposes of human life. A fascinating account of these experiments is given in a memorial volume, 'Sanderson of Oundle' compiled by his colleagues. Another good and readable account of his ideas will be found in 'The Story of a Great School Master' by H. G. Wells. Sanderson was apparently the only person, barring himself, who moved Wells to writing a biography! An account of the planning, organization and underlying ideas of the Belgian school is given by its founder, Vasconcellos, in a book which has been translated into English under the title of 'A New School in Belgium'. It describes how the principles of the new education were applied to concrete problems of physical, intellectual and moral education and how all school work was based on the twin principles of self-activity and group co-operation. Under the stress of the first World War, the school broke down but some of the ideas and methods worked out there, during its short life, are of permanent value and are being tried, with modifications, in many progressive schools.

It is the duty of our teachers to study carefully the working of such schools, to see how far their ideas are practicable under our circumstances and then proceed to put them into practice, undeterred (so far as possible) by the discouraging conditions surrounding them. They will find that in *all* such schools learning has been made an active process; the pupils' own activity is aroused by providing suitable materials and occupations which evoke their spontaneous interests and engage them in constructive activities. This demands that various forms of handwork, craft and 'expression work' should find recognition as vital factors in the educative process. Handwork should be treated not as a separate 'subject' of study but rather as a method of approach towards learning or as the centre of the educative process, designed to give the pupils a better

understanding of all the subjects of the curriculum. According to the great German educational reformer, George Kerschensteiner, productive work, carried out co-operatively and with interest, should form the basis of all real education and culture, rather than the printed book which has so far occupied the forefront of teachers' and pupils' attention. As we shall see later, this is also the view which underlies Gandhiji's scheme of Basic Education, although he started from an entirely different point and based his ideas, not on pedagogical theory, but on an intelligent and first-hand study of the needs of the country. In selecting suitable forms of productive work for introduction in schools, the guiding principle should be to reproduce through them typical social situations and occupations so that knowledge may be acquired by children in a context similar to that which they will meet in their later life.

There is one other characteristic of our school of the future without reference to which this outline picture will not be complete. It attaches supreme importance to the child's freedom and tries to secure conditions favouring spontaneity of development. The child is an autonomous organism, i.e. his growth is initiated from within. The teacher can change radically neither the pace of this growth nor its direction. Even if by persistent effort he succeeds in doing so, he will bring about an arrest or perversion of development. His function, as interpreted by the new education, is rather to 'follow nature' intelligently, providing such activities, occupations and stimuli in the child's environment as will release and feed his natural sources of energy. He removes from the child's path unnecessary obstructions, material as well as psychological; he encourages tendencies which are healthy and valuable. But the essential process of growth must be directed from within by the child himself. Practical implications of this principle of individuality (or autonomy) are manifold and reference has been made to them already in earlier pages.

✓ It postulates a system of free, not repressive, discipline and favours some suitable form of self-government in school. Rigidity of teaching procedures and classification, prescription of uniform standards of achievement and mechanical discipline

are all seen to be harmful, an unwarranted interference with the freedom of the child's growth. Disciplining of powers is, of course, essential if the child is to work towards an effective expression of the self in school and outside. But this discipline must increasingly be a restraint from within, inspired by a recognition of social obligations and of the conditions necessary for fruitful activity in a given situation. It is only in an environment where there is elasticity, variety and room for individual adaptation that the unique individuality of children, belonging to distinct psychological types, can be brought to fruition. ✓

Chapter III

THE SCHOOL IS A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT is the effect of the present school environment on the development of children? We have already seen that it is not so planned as to capture their interests and provide suitable outlets for their energies, because it has been, and still continues to be, too formal and bookish, exaggerating the importance of symbols and instruments of learning and ignoring the growing needs of the child towards activity and self-expression. Its rigid routine of work does not appeal to them. Every instinct in their being cries out against the repression of their physical activity, their creative and social impulses, their desire for doing, for construction, for experimentation with the environment. The problem before the educator is so to reorganize the work of the school that their attitude towards it may be completely altered and their irrepressible vitality and enthusiasm may be used in the service of school work. The problem is partly one of handling the ordinary school subjects differently, enriching their content, linking them more closely with child life and environment and thus enabling him to see greater significance and 'worthwhileness' in the school pursuits. This aspect has been discussed in the last chapter where I pointed out the need for transforming the school into an active environment, 'a hive of purposeful, creative activity'. The other aspects of this problem is concerned with the endeavour to enrich the life and work of the school by the introduction of what are generally called extra- or co-curricular activities and occupations which may not form an integral part of the traditional school curriculum but can, under proper conditions, become valuable means of providing social, cultural and intellectual education. They may take their rise normally out of the interests and preoccupations generated in ordinary school work

or they may be set into motion by the contagious enthusiasm of a teacher or an older student for some absorbing hobby. By being carried on in an atmosphere of spontaneity and freedom, these interests will be developed further according to the individual child's bent of mind and they will make exacting but educative demands on his powers of organization, resourcefulness and initiative which do not—but should!—find sufficient scope in the normal routine of school work. For, even if ordinary school teaching were much better organized than at present, there will be a considerable amount of formal subject-matter in it—grammar, the technique of skill subjects facts of history and geography—which will make demands on certain mental powers of the child but not bring into play certain other vital and creative capacities. It is to cater for this side of the child's nature that attempts are being made to widen the sphere of school activities, which may also embrace his leisure pursuits, so as to enlist all his manifold and growing powers and capacities and co-ordinate their development in a well-planned school environment. The school, thus broadened out, will extend its domain over the whole life of the child and provide for him work and play, theoretical studies and practical occupations, individual hobbies and corporate activities. It will help to resolve that sense of conflict or dissociation of attention which handicaps the child who has one attitude and personality at home or on the playground—active, dynamic and, in his own peculiar way, creative—and quite another in the school—a passively receptive automaton without any interests or enthusiasm! By relaxing the rigid and unnatural boundaries which divide the home from the school, work from leisure and studies from play and by taking the whole of child life within its province, the school environment can become educative in the truest sense.

In the West, particularly in the United States, this movement has made considerable headway and has been given a practical shape. Some educational authorities have extended the length of the school day, enlarged the school premises and buildings and modified the school time-table so as to include within it all suitable pursuits and activities. The idea is to

keep the child at school under educational influences as long as possible—say, for twelve hours a day and every day of the week—and provide within it facilities not only for study and play but also those associated with home life, with club life and with industrial workshops. Children work and play and pursue their hobbies and organize social functions and amusements in the school. Such a scheme was worked out for example by Superintendent Wirt for a whole school system and is generally known as the Gary Scheme. It is open to the obvious objection that it may keep the child away from home too long and lead to too much ‘school-mastering’. But the objection has been met by pointing out that, in the first place, these are not ‘school-masters’ schools’ where that autocrat sits apart ‘in awful dignity’, repressing his pupils; they are essentially free schools. Secondly, while home influence of the right kind is an inestimable blessing, most of the children, under the stress of modern life, are deprived of a real, *educative* home environment. In highly industrialized countries and localities where economic and industrial conditions have set into motion a progressive disintegration of family life, there is special need for a co-ordinating agency that would help to integrate the child’s life and act as a centrifugal force. Such a centre, in this age, must inevitably be the school which has, by force of circumstances, become the ‘residue legatee’ of many obligations neglected by the homes, the community and the churches. Nor is this only a matter of theoretical interest to us—we cannot afford to neglect the import and far-reaching significance of similar developments in our own country. None of our traditional institutions, which by their very nature are entrusted with grave responsibilities towards the education of the younger generation, are discharging their functions efficiently. The cultural chaos in India, consequent upon the breaking down of the old order and the imperfections of the new one, has deprived the children of the educative resources that are normally available in a well-ordered society. The home and the family, for instance, on which our culture has been built for ages, have ceased to exercise a genuine educative influence on the majority of children. The parents are often

too poor and ignorant to provide material and psychological conditions conducive to their proper growth. One cannot reasonably expect in most Indian homes those amenities of life which have a refining and cultural influence on children in other lands. The parents are preoccupied, more intensely than in other countries, with the urgent and unsolved problem of earning a livelihood and they have neither the leisure nor the resources of knowledge and of money to bring up their children properly. In saying this I am not ignoring the moral value and the disciplinary effect of, say, the arduous apprenticeship of village children on the farm and in the workshop. But one cannot get away from the fact that most children are brought up in an unhygienic, unrefined, de-educative environment and it is, therefore, the business of a good school to make up for the defects and handicaps of poor home conditions and make arrangements, *in the school*, for their social life, hobbies, games, etc. which might, under normal conditions, have been left over largely to the parents. We have to remember also that the other great social institutions—religious, vocational, political—are also not so organized as to share the burden of education with the school and we have, therefore, to see how we can adequately meet this difficult situation so that the school may be able to cater to the child's entire life and his varied interests.

The solution of this problem lies in the direction of making the schools ever more active and ever more creative. The first term has been discussed at some length already; the second, 'creative', needs elucidation. It is very difficult to convey, with any degree of fullness, the meaning of this rich and significant adjective.* 'Creativity' in education is not a mere 'method'; it is a spirit of approach to work, in which we express ourselves joyously, freely and spontaneously. There are three distinctive marks of all creative activity—a spontaneous entering into the activity because we feel that its completion, and the effort to that end, will add to our own becoming; freedom in the choice of our methods and means

* For a fuller discussion of the meaning of the creative impulse, see Chapter IV.

as well as from external bonds and restrictions; and, finally, joy which, according to Bergson, is 'the seal set by Nature' on all activity that involves a triumphant assertion and expression of our powers. Where these conditions are satisfied, creative activity results, not necessarily in the sense of bringing forth any artistic product of great merit but in the sense of having a releasing influence on our own personality and potentialities. This significance of the creative attitude may perhaps be aptly illustrated by an interesting, if rather unacademic, story by Anatole France, called 'Our Lady's Juggler'. The juggler, who is the central figure in it, is a great master in his own line of work and can perform juggling tricks which no one else in the trade can rival. He has a religious turn of mind and, after many years of successful career as a popular juggler, he decides to dedicate his life to the service of the Virgin Mary and enters a monastery. There he finds a crowd of highly-gifted artists, poets, sculptors and musicians who paint and sing and make beautiful statues and figures in honour of the Virgin. The juggler becomes dispirited and miserable because he can do nothing of the kind. He rages at himself for his incapacity, for having nothing worthy to offer at the altar of the Lady. One day, however, he has a flash of inspiration. He goes to the room where the Virgin's statue is placed, closes all the doors and, standing on his head, begins to perform in her honour, with all his skill and devotion, those juggling tricks which had delighted his spectators in the days of old. He forgets himself entirely in his work (or worship?); he has no idea of the respect conventionally due to the place where he is performing these antics. The joy of the true artist seizes him and, inspired by the suppressed yearnings of years of consecrated life, he puts his heart and soul into the performance and excels himself. Then, by chance, some monks see him do this; they are angry and think it a great sacrilege. But as they are thinking of removing him from the place, by force if necessary, they see, to their great astonishment, the statue of the Virgin Mary step down from the pedestal and brush his sweating brow with her mantle!

The rare psychological insight of the author has beautifully

expressed in this symbolical story the underlying significance of the juggler's work. It is self-expression, pure and simple, inspired by genuine interest and devotion. It is free and spontaneous and yields joy to the worker and is, therefore, truly creative work—not from the point of view of the on-lookers who happened on him—the philistines!—but from the point of view of the juggler himself and the Virgin who could appreciate the motive and the spirit inspiring the work, rendered precious and valuable because it had called into its service his whole-hearted devotion and focussed within itself his best and highest powers. It is in this sense that every individual child and adult can do creative work in his or her own particular sphere, whether humble or exalted. Psychology confirms the view that every normal child has some spark of special talent—if only we could discover it—and the business of the teacher is to do so and to see to it that it is given opportunities of full expression. I concede that the work done by all the children under the circumstances will not be of any great artistic value. But because of the influence which it will have on each child's attitude and personality, it will be far more valuable than any technically perfect productive work, completed under the detailed and minute but mechanical supervision of the teacher. For, as Bergson suggests, "the ultimate reason of human life is a creation which, in distinction from that of the artist or man of science, can be pursued at every moment and by all men alike . . . (namely) *the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality by elements that it does not draw from outside but causes to spring forth from itself.*"

It is this creative work that we want in our schools, so that children may, through it, 'create their own selves' and enrich their understanding and interests. I shall take a few examples to show how certain valuable activities can be utilized to add creativeness to school life. I shall not, however, at any length deal here with the creative teaching of the usual school subjects, although it is a very fascinating field to explore. I may just point out by way of illustration that there are certain subjects which lend themselves pre-eminently

to creative teaching. Literature, for example, is one of the highest products of creative imagination and the only sound approach to its study and appreciation is the creative approach through which one learns to appreciate the beauty of form and expression by actually creating literature. Experiments have been successfully carried out in the direction of teaching literature in a creative spirit in close correlation with poetry, music and painting. The teaching of composition, likewise, offers numerous opportunities for the creative method. Similarly, History, Geography and Science can be made to yield creative joy and opportunity for self-expression, if rightly presented. But leaving aside school subjects, let us turn to other activities of a 'semi-curricular' and 'extra-curricular' type, like gardening, manual work, craft work, social service, literary clubs, school magazine, which give fine opportunities for making school life active, meaningful and creative for children. To fulfil this object, they must satisfy three conditions:

1. They should extend and carry further the interests—intellectual, practical, social, or artistic—which have been generated in the course of ordinary school teaching and should establish a mutually enriching contact between the 'academic' work of the school and the students' leisure hobbies.

2. They should give scope for the creative expression of all that is unique and individual in every pupil and, since they belong to various psychological types, this would call for considerable variety in the nature of these activities.

3. They should make a call on the students' initiative, resourcefulness and capacity for co-operative and disciplined work under democratic leadership, for the development of these qualities of character is largely ignored in the routine activities of the classroom.

What activities, then, shall we choose to illustrate our point? It is obvious that ultimately every school must evolve a set of such activities in the light of its own special circumstances, i.e. its material resources, the nature of its envioning life, its pupils' interests and the hobbies of its teachers. In details there can be no uniformity, although they may be chosen

under the guidance of the same broad, general principles. For the sake of illustration, I shall choose a few of the many available activities, i.e. those that are typical and representative and offer, within themselves, considerable room for variety and individual adaptation. "The value of such activities is being increasingly recognized now both at the primary (basic) level and the secondary level. ✓

MANUAL WORK OR CRAFTS

I place manual work of various kinds or crafts at the head of the list because of its very important role in the child's early development. Psychologically, its value lies in keeping the theoretical and practical elements of the child's experience in proper co-ordination and harmony which the formal academic work of the school is in danger of upsetting. Sociologically, its value lies in making shared activity and social control possible. As a method of instruction, it helps in the better understanding and mastery of all school subjects. It is obviously essential in the teaching of sciences, but is no less important for the understanding and appreciation of arts subjects like history and literature. There is 'no appreciation without creation' and one of the elements involved in most creative activity is manual work. Further, there is a much greater possibility of cultivating the unique and distinctive gifts of each individual pupil through activities like woodworking, gardening, drawing, painting, etc., than through the routine processes involved in ordinary school teaching. There are certain types of manual work which should, in my opinion, find place in every properly conducted school, as on psychological as well as social grounds they are helpful in the development of the child.

(a) Woodwork is important because it offers possibilities of doing more complex and developing work which are practically unlimited and which the child, with his growing mastery over technique and his constructive imagination, cannot easily exhaust. It enables him to gain control over his muscular

activity and achieve nervous co-ordination and it gives him a practical insight into ordinary mechanical processes and the use of tools without which an individual is always apt to remain somewhat helpless and maladjusted to his environment. Moreover, it is an honourable and useful craft the practice of which gives one a sense of personal worthfulness and utility. From the point of view of traditional school work, it is useful because it lends itself to correlation with work in history, geography, science and mathematics, by which the teaching of these subjects can be made more interesting and realistic.

(b) Gardening is a delightful hobby and an education in itself. If I had my way I would have every student in school doing some gardening and every teacher taking it up as a leisure hobby. For, gardening has a natural affinity with the art of education, of bringing up children, since both have to do with the care and growth of living and growing organisms. It was not a mere coincidence that Froebel in his writings always compared the teacher to a gardener and named his children's school 'kindergarten'. It is a living and truly creative activity which gives scope for the training of the aesthetic sense; through it may be established that communion with Nature which brings a sense of peace and repose to the individual so highly prized by the best spirits of the East. Further, it can give valuable help in the teaching of Nature Study, Botany and Geography which otherwise run the risk of becoming classroom abstractions. When the world—and educational authorities—become really civilized, we can look forward to every school, especially the school for young children, being situated in a pleasant garden, whose beauty and peace will act unconsciously on their personalities and help them to grow into that grace and repose which Wordsworth cherished for his *Nature's Child*:

*She shall be sporting as the fawn
That, wild with glee, across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm*

*And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.
The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willows bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.*

It will be the school garden more than anything else that will act on them 'by silent sympathy'. But this will be possible only if the garden is their own creation, not a ready-made, gardener-kept show which they discover to be as much a part of their surroundings as the school rooms. Nothing can give more joy and pride to the members of a school community than to be able to say: "This is our garden; we have created it!"

(c) Besides woodwork and gardening, weaving, drawing, painting and, for younger children, clay modelling and cardboard work are means of creative self-expression. The child is by nature, as I have already stressed, a creator and delights in making his impress on his environment, in giving a concrete form to the projects and ideas playing in and on his mind. That is why 'play' comes so naturally to him—in play he can 'create' most easily by letting his manipulation and imagination give some new shape to whatever physical materials are available. Through the medium of pencil, paper, paints, clay, cardboard, etc. a child learns, under proper guidance, to express himself with facility and this work, partaking of the nature of free play, is sure to have a wholesome influence on the culture of his personality.

SCHOOL SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

The above illustrations deal with creative activities in which the element of *manual* work predominates. But there are certain other types of activities, equally useful and important,

in which the intellectual and academic element is more dominant and they also fulfil the conditions laid down in preceding paragraphs for enriching the life of school children.

In any active and well conducted school there spring up, more or less spontaneously, a number of societies and clubs to cater for children's corporate interests and purposes, organized and maintained by their initiative and enthusiasm. In its healthy and stimulating environment, boys with like interests and hobbies will be naturally drawn together and form small groups to work out their special lines of interest. With wise direction and timely encouragement, these groups may become centres of vigorous and growing intellectual interests. There may be one group collecting botanical specimens for the school museum, another studying special topics of history and writing papers on them, a third going out on geographical excursions or exploring factories and local industries, a fourth learning the art of public speaking. There might be a School Photographic Society keeping a record of school activities and outdoor excursions and tours, a Literary Society where students will sit and enjoy, at their ease, good stories, fiction and other literature. There will be games and sports clubs and scouting—the last one being particularly rich in possibilities, for it can be made a central activity linking and weaving together many of the academic and practical hobbies and pursuits of children. The great advantage of such activities in school is that they impart a new vitality to the whole of school learning and provide excellent training in initiative, resourcefulness and leadership for the students. It is through managing such organizations and functions and dealing with men and things that many of their sterling qualities are brought out and developed. They carry further the knowledge and interests initiated at home or in school and often lay the foundation of what may later turn out to be one's master-passion or life-pursuit. For, has not many a public man truly found himself in the debating hall of his school or college union and many an explorer been discovered and trained, in a real if modest sense, through the small excursions and explorations organized by school boys?

THE SCHOOL MAGAZINE

The natural outcome of the vigorous functioning of school societies and clubs should be a school organ that would record their doings and activities so that the whole school may keep in touch with what is going on in the various groups that constitute it. It will also provide a healthy outlet for the children's desire to express themselves in a tangible form. The school magazine is, therefore, important as an organ of the intellectual life and other activities of the school and as providing a motive and a forum for literary and artistic self-expression on the part of its students. A good essay, written for the teacher, will not then seem like an entry into a blind alley; it may lead to the light—the limelight!—of the school magazine. Thus the achievements and activities—literary, artistic, practical—of the various groups are integrated, as it were, in the school magazine. Besides, it also provides valuable discipline and training in organization and executive ability for the members of the editorial staff who are connected in different capacities with the work. It will be useful, therefore, to associate with it as many pupils as possible and not make it the close preserve of two or three bright students only. Anyone interested to know what an incredible change of atmosphere can be brought about in a school through this venture will do well to read the account of one such experiment given by Ernest Young in his delightful book, 'The New Era in Education'. It shows how, under capable guidance, a school magazine may become not merely a record but a creator of active, intellectual life.

THE SCHOOL EXHIBITION

The annual School Exhibition should bring together and display in a well-arranged and striking form the best of the educative and constructive work done by the students in or outside the school. This will give them a strong incentive to work willingly and at the top of their form all the year round

so that, on this occasion, they may present to their parents and other interested members of the local community the creative work being done by them and the public may learn to take pride in the artistic and practical achievements of the school. In India particularly, where contact between the school and the local community is often slight and parents come into the presence of the Headmaster only when something is wrong, this may well provide an opportunity to draw them together into a pleasant and mutually advantageous companionship. Moreover, this will also be an opportunity for the boys themselves to get a composite view of the productive work done during the year, and if it is a regular annual function, it will be an agency for transmitting the legacy of the older boys to the younger ones and thus building up a tradition of good work and *esprit de corps* in school. It will be a very valuable stimulus and provide worthy hobbies and interests for pupils of varying tastes and capacities. I believe it is possible for every school to make a start in this direction on a modest scale, for many of these activities do not involve much outlay of money. But they do call for intelligence, enthusiasm, patient foresight and careful planning of students' work by the teachers.

What will this Exhibition display? I might indicate some of its important features and possible exhibits:

1. Specimens of art work—painting, drawing, calligraphy, etc.
2. Specimens of handicrafts—woodwork, metal work, clay work, book-binding, science apparatus made by boys.
3. Collection of plants, seeds, botanical exhibits, stamps, pictures and such other things as students take delight in hoarding and as can be used for making teaching more effective.
4. Illustrations like maps, charts, diagrams for the teaching of history, geography and science and graphic representations of statistics relating to local conditions collected through social surveys.
5. Students' essays, papers and different kinds of written

work, care being taken to choose only the best of those submitted.

SOCIAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Finally, I may refer to another set of activities—namely, those that are inspired by the desire for social service. For reasons which are inherent in our present social situation, nothing is more important than awakening and cultivating in our students a strong urge for social work, so that their education may really become a humanizing influence in their own life and the life of the community.

It is not possible to enter here into any detailed discussion of all that is possible in this direction. By way of illustration, mention may be made of one such activity which has been tried in many schools and should be more largely adopted, i.e. manual service undertaken not for the sake of acquiring technical skill but for the repair and upkeep of school furniture and equipment and the cleanliness and decoration of the school environment. As a part of their general training, children should be taught to feel responsible for keeping their surroundings nice and clean and not to grudge personal labour for the sake of this worthy purpose. The experiment has been tried in schools of many countries of giving, say, one day each month and one whole week at the end of the year to work of this kind when boys devote themselves to the service of the school by cleaning the garden, repairing the roads, mending school desks and chairs and generally overhauling the whole school from top to bottom. How this adds to their love for and attachment to the school—a school 'shaped by their own hands'—can hardly be imagined by those who have never tried the experiment. Many years ago, as a student I participated in such an experiment carried out at the Hali Muslim High School, Panipat, which had the good fortune to have for its Secretary a gentleman with great educational vision and imagination. The school had set aside, at the instance of the Secretary, one hour a week for each class

(which they called 'the hour of service') when all boys of that class took up service of some kind for the sake of the school. They cleaned the school rooms, repaired the roads inside the compound and, in the carpentry class, mended broken chairs and desks. There was a Persian wheel attached to the school well which was worked by the boys in turn to water the garden which they had themselves planted. Now, it is impossible to overestimate the moral and social value of such corporate service, for it is really in carrying out willingly and honestly these small duties and humble services, inspired by some great purpose, that the character of an individual is slowly and surely forged. I saw the Secretary of the school, a distinguished old man of all-India reputation, personally assisting the teachers and the boys in removing bricks from the courtyard of the school and cleaning it up after building operations. Is there a better and truer way to make boys realize the meaning of 'the dignity of labour' or to appreciate the inspired gospel of Thomas Carlyle: "All true work is sacred. . . . The latest gospel in the world is: 'Know thy work and do it' "? It was perhaps the lingering memory of that experience which prompted me, as Director of Education in the Kashmir State, to work out the 'Labour Week' scheme in all the State schools. An account of this experiment is reproduced as an Appendix at the end of the book.

How can we, then, in the face of all these experiments and this irresistible evidence of what a school may become, confine school work to the learning of the three R.s and a few other dry 'subjects'? In the reconstruction of education that awaits us we must change radically the nature of our school environment, making it dynamic and creative instead of passive and mechanical; we must enrich the curriculum by the introduction of vital and worthwhile subject-matter and bring methods of teaching and discipline into living relationship with the motive forces of community life. The schools will thus become active and joyous communities of youth, open to the best influences of the environment, providing within them scope for all kinds of creative activity—manual, intellectual, social and artistic—catering for the needs of work as well as leisure and, above

all, offering to the child a life that will be intrinsically interesting and worthwhile both immediately and later. It is to the fashioning of this living, creative environment within the schools that the teachers should dedicate all their efforts and energies. The great value of the Basic Education scheme, for instance, lies in the fact that it is a big step in the direction of bridging the distance not only between education and social life but also between education and the child's native interests.

Chapter IV

THE SCHOOL AS THE CENTRE OF COMMUNITY LIFE

I

IN the last two chapters, we have examined the characteristics of the school as an active and a creative environment. In this, I propose to deal with the relationship of the school to the environing life of the community whose purposes it is meant to serve, and to work out some of its implications for the organization of school activities. To place this matter in its proper perspective, it will be helpful to recall to our mind the social meaning of the educational process.

Education is essentially a social affair and the school is charged by society with the duty of training and bringing up the youth so that they may be able to participate effectively in the life of the group to which they belong. They cannot inherit automatically their social heritage as they might their father's property. They have to learn how to come into active possession of the cultural and institutional heritage which has been bequeathed to them by their predecessors. Without the light of experience stored up in books, in work and in social contacts they will grope in the dark and waste their efforts. Nor will they be in a position to evaluate intelligently and reconstruct this culture in the light of their present needs. This point of approach indicates the true conception of school work. We are far too apt to consider and decide educational problems from an exclusively individualistic point of view, neglecting the social relationships and bearings of education. We forget that education—whether in schools or colleges—is after all not an isolated activity but related at all points to life and responsive to all the forces that play on it. The school is—or rather should be—‘an idealized epitome’ of social life, reflecting within it the *elements* of all the worthwhile major

activities that make up the work of society. The notion that the school just 'trains' an individual—trains his 'faculties', his senses, his mind—is entirely inadequate. For, it leads one naturally to ask: "Trains with reference to what?" and provides no clue to a satisfactory answer. The individual has certainly to be trained, but with reference to, and partly for the sake of, the needs, demands and ideals of the bigger society outside. And since these demands are always changing, enlarging and modifying themselves, it is necessary that the school should be in vital rapport with the life outside school and should educate children for a changing and dynamic environment. Otherwise there is always the danger—as is obviously the case in our country—of its being dominated by a rigid formalism and of substituting the ghosts of the past for the realities of the present. There is the danger, I repeat, of its cultivating an air-tight exclusiveness and exalting the value of mere symbols over the forces and phenomena of life which they were originally meant to represent. When this happens literature becomes, as it did with the scholastics, a drill in niceties of grammar and subtleties of language—it is no longer an epitome of the hopes and sufferings, the achievement and failures of the past and present generations. Mathematics is conceived, not as a social tool valuable for the measurement and understanding of all the quantitative phenomena of life, but a juggling with abstract symbols or such inane problems as determining, say, the quantity of food consumed by three oxen and a half in two years, two months and four days at the rate of two seers and $11\frac{1}{2}$ chhataks a day! I am quoting the kind of problems one actually finds in school textbooks and many teachers will probably be able to supply other equally ridiculous examples. They are valuable because they indicate how the gulf has widened between knowledge and life—to the detriment of both. Similarly, Science is not taught as the fascinating record of the struggle of the human mind against Nature's forces and the wresting of Nature's laws by patient observation and research. It is not presented from the point of view of 'Science in the service of Man' but as abstract laws and formulae which the student has to memorize

as the Brahmins of old memorized 'mantras' or 'religious' minded persons memorize verses from their Holy Books today without even understanding them. But while they can bring forward the apology (or the justification?) that they do so for the salvation of their souls, the former are denied even that consolation and can plead nothing as an excuse beyond the rigours of examinations!

I have made this digression to bring out the divorce which has unfortunately occurred between school and life and to emphasize the fact that, unless right points of contact are established between the two, education would remain ineffective and artificial, incapable of being utilized as an instrument of social progress. There is no educationist of modern times who realized this defect more vividly and did more to remedy it than Dr. John Dewey of America. He has stressed, in unambiguous terms, the need of referring all school learning and problems back to life, from which they originally emanate. Appraising the change that is working its way into the teaching of schools through the introduction of active 'occupations', related to the social situations of adult life, he has stated:

"To do this means to make each one of our schools an embryonic community, active and with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society, and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious."*

Our first problem, then, is to transform schools into miniature 'communities' where the child learns through direct living. They are, at present, just 'places to learn certain lessons having some abstract and remote reference to some

* Dewey: *School and Society*.

possible living to be done in the future'. This transformation is only possible when the element of shared and productive activity has been introduced in it so that, through participation in corporate duties, they will learn the lessons of self-discipline, leadership and social cohesion without which community life is impossible. If the motive and the organization for corporate work are missing in the school, it will not be possible to inculcate in the students that social spirit which alone can make them active and efficient members of their group.

The next problem is to bring the school out of its isolation and connect it organically with all the worthy aspects of community life. This involves the utilization in school of the child's outside experiences, the basing of his studies on, and linking them with, the knowledge and information and interests he brings with him to school. There is a great deal of waste in the school at present on account of the failure of teachers to utilize this vital experience for purposes of effective teaching. It is obvious that the most abiding elements of his knowledge and skill, his insight into social ethics and forms of social life and his growing understanding of adult values are gained in the home, on the playground and in social intercourse with his friends, relatives and other people. It is for the teacher to press these into his service, to connect his academic symbols with their real meanings as embodied in the community life of which the child is gaining first-hand knowledge every day. Thus he has to make it clear, for example, that geography is nothing but a systematic and somewhat formal account of the facts and phenomena of animal, plant and human life which surround the child every moment of his life; that 'composition' is but another way of communicating experiences, ideas and feelings that he does every day through speech; that arithmetic or botany or any other school subject is but an epitomized and symbolic representation of the business life or the farm and garden life which he observes for himself outside school. This method of presentation will preserve the unity and the continuity of the child's experience and facilitate the inter-play of influences between the school and the outside world. It will bring to school studies greater

concreteness and vividness and stimulate more spontaneous interest on the part of the child. Conversely, his out-of-school life will benefit by the refining and enlarging influence of school ideas which will be carried over from the class room to the child's home. This will, no doubt, involve a change in our point of view and an abandoning of some of the most cherished conceptions which have traditionally dominated the organization of the school life. It will mean exalting co-operation above competition, shared activity above passive receptivity, a recognition of the value of play and children's hobbies and a readiness to discard the present highly systematized and logical methods of approach in favour of others which may seem less organized but are in reality more psychological. The starting point will be, *not* systematized bodies of knowledge neatly arranged and classified—each labelled with a name—but the immediate environment and the community life around the child. The tradition-bound teachers would first sneer and then protest but the gain to the children, in joyousness and the release of their creative powers, is worth both the sneer and the protest!

So far I have indicated one important aspect of this problem—that is, the school should be in intimate contact with community life. But there are two other closely connected problems which require to be considered briefly in order to complete the picture. Firstly: what are the methods that have been tried or may be tried to bring about this contact? Secondly: what implications has this general principle for the different kinds of schools in India?

The first problem need not detain us long because that is really a problem which has to be solved by every school individually. It depends on the peculiar circumstances of the school and the type of life and occupations to be found in the locality. A primary school teacher in a rural area can do much towards the betterment of rural life and incidentally the establishment of his own position and prestige in the community. But there is a larger aspect of the problem in which this one is included. It is not merely the teacher who has to make himself the centre of community life and a radiating

source of light and learning—it is the school as a whole that has to assume this position. The present weakness in the position of the school system in India is that the people do not realize, and cannot realize, that the school is one of *their* institutions, is *their* concern. For all practical purposes, it is just as much an *official* concern, a Government institution, as the law court or the railway or the prison! It should become what the Germans and the Scandinavians have happily termed a 'Volkschule', a real 'people's school'.

A 'people's school', must obviously, be based on the people's needs and problems. Its curriculum should be an epitome of their life. Its methods of work must approximate to theirs. It should reflect all that is significant and characteristic in the life of the community in its natural setting. In the rural areas, for example, the school should help the children to realize sympathetically the problems of rural life and train them to take part in it effectively when they have finished schooling. An acquaintance with plants and animals, with agriculture and gardening, with the laws of personal hygiene and sanitation, with the valuable and injurious elements in village life, should be considered more important for the village schoolboy than abstract arithmetical calculations or the learning of a foreign language. He should come to love nature and appreciate the significance of productive manual work, valuing theoretical and academic studies for the enlarging influence they have on the culture of his personality and the light they throw on the problems and difficulties which he finds around him. Similarly, in an industrial area, the school should gradually make the child familiar with industrial tools and processes and the conditions of life in the factories so that he may appreciate both the technical and the human elements of the situation. He should begin to take an interest in the multifarious civic problems which have been ushered into existence by these larger social changes, valuing books and studies as sources of knowledge and power which add to his efficiency as a human being and as a productive member of society. If the school curriculum remains as bookish as it is at present, if in the organization of its time-table and

teaching methods and discipline it does not allow for the special needs and problems of the locality, it will fail to get a grip on the imagination, the sympathy and the support of the people.

But that is not enough. The school has to go further and interest itself actively in the welfare of the community. Experiments of various kinds have been tried in different countries to bring about this close co-ordination between the school and community life. Reference may be made, as an illustration, to what was known as the 'Gary Scheme' in America. I need not go into details of this scheme here but will refer to the two basic ideas which underlie it in order to show that there is nothing extraordinary about them and that, if our view of the function of the school were accepted, such ideas would naturally suggest themselves to our more intelligent teachers.

Firstly, this scheme brings the teaching of various subjects into active touch with community life, e.g. teaching of Physics and Chemistry being related, say, to the problem of purifying municipal water or protecting confectionary from contamination, or the teaching of Civics with reference to actual municipal life. Members of the community, belonging to various walks of life, are invited to give the benefit of their direct, first-hand experiences to the school children. Secondly, actual use of the school building is made by the parents in the evenings. It becomes their club and a centre for exchange of ideas—a sort of social 'clearing house'—where teachers and parents of the boys can meet and discuss in a friendly way the problems, educational and social, with which they are faced and in which both are interested.

The advantages of such an educational approach are obvious. The school becomes truly the centre of community life, from which can radiate light and learning and movement of reform. The tax-payers feel that they are really getting a return for their money and they become actually interested in the welfare of the school, which is thus taken out of its isolation and reinstated in its true position as an important social centre. The teacher, too, can improve his position and prestige and

become the leader of the social group if he has the capacity to do so. The boys gain tremendously by learning their sciences and other subjects in the context of their actual social setting, and they can carry over their knowledge easily from the school to the life of the community with which they have already made their acquaintance.

Finally, let us consider briefly some of the things which an average Indian school can undertake in this behalf.

(1) Both in rural and in urban areas, the schools should become centres of adult or social education. They should conduct a regular campaign against illiteracy and educate the parents, teaching not only the three R.s but initiating them into the ordinary rules and laws of hygiene, social organization and corporate life. The teachers and senior students should be associated in this work which would provide valuable discipline in social service. In recent years many schemes and plans of 'Social Education' have been drawn up by the Central and Provincial Governments and by non-official agencies and some good work has been done. But the paucity of finances and good personnel has badly handicapped all such efforts. Whatever may be the final set-up for Social Education, the schools have a part to play in this behalf and they should initiate this movement as a labour of love. If this is done, I feel sure that they will be ultimately repaid for it in a variety of ways.

(2) All schools should organize some sort of *social survey* clubs which would undertake to investigate into some of the crying needs and problems of the neighbouring community life, e.g. the conditions of the roads, the drainage of the town or the village, the hygienic and sanitary conditions of the surrounding areas, the sources of epidemics, the supply of foodstuffs, the main industries and occupations of the locality. Each investigation will be undertaken by a small group of boys who are interested in the problem and have made some study of the subject and they should work under the guidance of a teacher who will help them and suggest lines of attack. They should, at the end, draw up a report incorporating their suggestions which may, if necessary, be forwarded to the

municipal committee through the Headmaster. It is difficult to exaggerate the possibilities of useful work implicit in such undertakings. Old teachers may sneer at such 'unorthodox' activities but all thoughtful people are gradually coming round to the belief that a study of the child's immediate environment should form an essential part of his early education. Moreover, it will have a very vitalizing influence on his school studies, because they will now gain the illumination of a motive and a purpose, and acquire a concreteness and reality which have been hitherto denied to them.

(3) As a corollary of the above, it follows that there should also be some kinds of *social service* leagues in schools. It is not enough to know the defects in our environment—we have to make our own little contribution to putting things right. These leagues would come forward whenever there is an occasion for their help—at the times of a flood or an epidemic or a festival or a procession or any other suitable opportunity demanding disciplined work. Their work could be profitably co-ordinated with the scout organization which is inspired by similar aims and ideals. These leagues could also take up the work of helping the poor and needy students within the school by providing books, scholarships and other suitable forms of assistance. Not only have such things been done in other countries but I know of several institutions in India where such work is being successfully done by students. I would like to invite the attention of teachers, in this connection, to an interesting brochure 'Social Service in Schools' published, a few years ago, by the Office of the Educational Adviser to the Bombay Government. It describes a number of experiments in social work carried out voluntarily by many schools in the Bombay State. If it is true that what one man has done another man can do, surely it is truer to say that the social service work done by these schools can be attempted, in some form, by others with reasonable success.

Nor is such social service to be confined to the *schools* only. I have used this word as denoting all educational institutions. It is even more imperatively the duty of the Colleges and the Universities to take a hand in the reconstruction of

national life and to extend the scope of higher education and disseminate culture beyond their local habitation to the whole country. In several European countries, where I had some opportunity of studying student activities, I was struck with the tremendous amount of work undertaken and successfully carried out by the students of Universities and Colleges. But for them, not only the intellectual life but in some cases the survival of the student population would have been endangered. Nor was this service confined to their own people and country. The part played by an organization like the International Student Service in doing social service and manual work in other countries, before and after World War II, is one of the few auguries of hope in a world full of conflicts and hatreds.

Education should, therefore, be taken out of its seclusion and reinstated in its true position as the premier social and intellectual activity of mankind. Unless the schools can respond—in accordance, of course, with their special needs and circumstances—to the ideas that have been briefly discussed here, they will not succeed in exerting any powerful or vitalizing influence on national life. And the present discontent against education will grow apace and lead to unhappy consequences which no educationist can contemplate with equanimity.

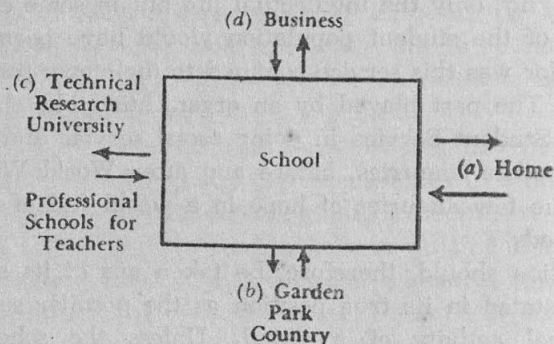
II

In order to sum up this discussion about the School of the Future and bring before the readers something like a diagrammatic sketch, I reproduce below three diagrams borrowed from Dewey's 'School and Society', to show how it will be organically connected with the life of the community, how its internal life will be organized on the basis of productive and constructive social activities and how it will, in consequence, be transformed into a vitalizing and creative environment where children can live in stimulating contact with all that is of permanent and abiding value in the achievements of the human race and thus grow in understanding, appreciation

and control. Brief explanatory notes are appended with each diagram to clarify the ideas underlying it.

DIAGRAM NO. I

The School in Relation to its Environment



In this diagram, the school is conceived of as an organic part of social life, inter-connected with the various important 'institutions' of society, acting on them and being acted upon by them in return and deriving its curriculum and subject-matter from the rich and varied life of adult society. The following points are specially deserving of note:

- (a) There is a free interplay of ideas, influences and materials between the home and the school.
- (b) There is a close relationship with the natural environment, the study of which develops into 'geography' and science.
- (c) There is inter-action between the highest and the lowest parts of the system. The work being done, in the field of Psychology, Sociology, Biology, etc. in the Universities and in the Training Colleges will enrich the understanding of school methods and problems, and the validity of their theoretical research will be tested at the touchstone of practice in schools.
- (d) There should be free play between the school and the

problems and needs of business and industry. This involves not a preparation for one particular calling but a bringing to the child's consciousness of the business and economic relationships of society—factory, bank, labour, crafts, agriculture, etc.—as corporate activities. The task of the school will be both to provide a pre-vocational bias by offering alternative courses in the higher classes and to liberalize the vocational aspect by showing its relationship with larger and more important life purposes. This is what our reorganized secondary schools—the 'multipurpose' schools—are trying to work out.

Diagrams No. II (below) and No. III (overleaf) represent not the architectural plan of the school but attempt to give an idea of the internal environment of the school and its activities in a symbolic form.

DIAGRAM No. II

Lower Storey of the School

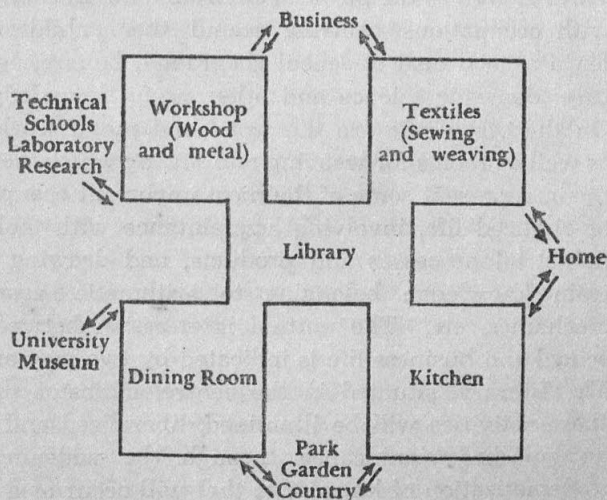


DIAGRAM No. III

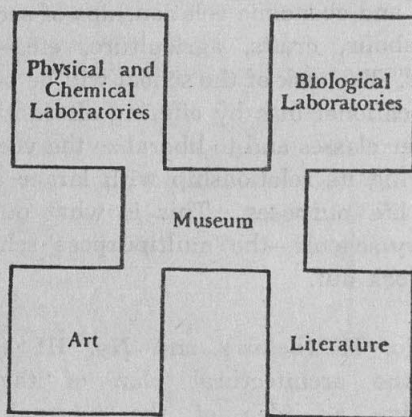
Upper Storey of the School

Diagram No. II brings out the following points:

- (1) On one side are the Kitchen and the Dining Room with obvious connections between them and the home activities as well as the physical environment. In connection with occupations centring round them children will learn a good deal of school geography, botany, agriculture, domestic science and other useful knowledge.
- (2) On the other side are the wood and metal workshops as well as rooms for weaving and sewing which, between them, represent some of the most important occupations of civilized life, involving acquaintance with tools and industrial processes and products, and drawing in its train knowledge belonging to arithmetic, geometry, mechanics, etc. The mutual inter-action between the school and business life is indicated by two-way arrows.
- (3) The Library, situated in the centre, indicates that all these activities will be illumined, liberalized and given an enriched significance through the widening and systematization of knowledge that will occur as a result of self-initiated or teacher-guided study. The library

stands for classes, discussion groups, theoretical explorations arising out of felt needs of practical activity. It also shows that, while book knowledge is subsidiary to activity, it is all-important as interpreting and expanding knowledge and increasing the children's power and control.

Diagram No. III is a symbolic representation of the theoretical side of school activities, showing how theory will grow out of practice, how problems created will be brought to the laboratories for study and elucidation. The following points may be specially noted:

- (a) Physical, Chemical and Biological problems arising in the workshop or the garden will be taken to their respective laboratories and worked out there.
- (b) All true art grows out of the artisan's or craftman's work. The practical work being carried out in the workshops and the hobbies adopted by students will lead to the activities of drawing, painting, designing and modelling in the Art room.
- (c) Literature will be a co-ordinating factor and a liberalizing influence over the entire work of the school: literature, which will include not only prose and poetry of a high order enshrining within it all that men have suffered, hoped for and transmitted into artistic expression, but also the other elements of the Humanities—history, human geography, etc.
- (d) The Museum, placed in the centre, is meant to symbolize a collection of all creative work, whether done in the school or obtained from outside, to act as an inspiration and a vehicle of cultural heritage.

When our schools are envisaged in these terms and patterned accordingly, when they break the four walls around them and let the currents of life play on them, we shall bring about an educational revolution of enormous potential, such as we may find difficult to envisage.

Chapter V

EDUCATION FOR HAPPINESS (I)

1

IN the title of this chapter I have coupled two words which do not usually keep company and their conjunction might be objected to by different schools of thought on grounds of fact or of ideology. As education is at present imparted in schools, it does not promote happiness; whatever happiness and sunshine manage to work their way into the life of children and adolescents, come, as it were, adventitiously—not provided by the school consciously, but as a by-product of their associated life and of their natural impulses towards finding joy in the mere fact of corporate living. In the institutions of higher education, the Colleges and the Universities, there is a good deal of pleasant social life and fellow feeling; games and sports and corporate activities of various kinds are encouraged and, except when the dread of examinations is too imminent to be ignored, students manage to have a 'nice time' which is proved by the fact that they often recall with pleasure the reminiscences of this care-free period of their life. But here, too, we are faced with the question: Are they being educated for happiness? Does their education equip them with the intellectual outlook and the emotional qualities which are necessary for leading a happy life? It is one thing to enjoy life in the specially prepared and sheltered environment of a College or a University and quite another to make a good and pleasant business of life in the wide, unsheltered world where one must rely on one's own resources and draw strength and inspiration from the inmost recesses of one's own being. If our higher education did succeed in training people for happiness, we should be justified in assuming that the measure of happiness should be fuller and more generously distributed amongst the educated classes than amongst the illiterate

peasants, labourers and craftsmen who have never had the benefit of any formal education. But our experience of the discontent, the conflicts and the mental and emotional unhappiness which characterize the life of the educated people warns us against any such assumption and leaves us wondering why education and happiness do not go together.

The moral idealist, on the other hand, might frown upon this idea heavily from an entirely different point of view. He will not challenge the facts of the situation but seriously question the validity of our premises. Why *should* there be an education for happiness? Life is a hard task-master and provides for the ordinary individual no primrose path of pleasure and enjoyment. Any dalliance with the idea of happiness, in the tradition of the hedonists, is likely in due course to bring well-merited punishment on the offender's head. You may perhaps succeed, he would say, in making education pleasant and sugar-coated, in sheltering children and adolescents from the routine and drudgery and self-denial which life demands but—to what end? Tomorrow when your soft, hot-house nourished scholars go out into the modern world where stress and competition and temptations prevail, they will find themselves hopelessly bewildered and incapable of dealing with its exacting situations and demands. It is not only from the point of view of efficiency and worldly success that the idealist will object to our position; he will also invoke the moral law and 'the categorical imperative' and ask, with that air of disdain which superior knowledge brings in its train, what we propose to do to strengthen the child's moral fibre and train him for a life consecrated to the service of what is just and right and true, rather than what is expedient, easy and self-gratifying. Thus the burden of proof lies on the thoughtless person who couples education with happiness—he has to show that it is possible and desirable to bring together these two terms, in the interest both of the child and society.

Before attempting to analyse the assumptions—and, to my mind, the wrong assumptions—which back up these objections, it will be useful to state my own position in this matter

unambiguously. I believe that it is certainly possible so to organize schools and to impart education that the process brings joy in its train and gives greater zest to the life of the children. So far as our own country is concerned this is unfortunately far from being the actual fact; the educational institutions more frequently repress than release the creative energies of youth and cramp their self-expression.* But there is nothing intrinsic in the nature of the educative process which militates against the spirit of joy; in fact, if rightly interpreted, education should bring the students into ever more fruitful relations with their enriched environment and mature their growing powers of understanding and appreciation and thus give them a sense of increased self-confidence, of better harmony with their surroundings and a consequent feeling of peace and happiness. Secondly, I believe that it is not only *desirable* but imperatively *necessary* that education should strengthen this sense of happiness in individuals, giving them an intellectual and emotional equipment which will enable them to find it in whatever sphere of life their work may lie. It should be one of the main functions and distinctive features of our 'School of the Future' that it makes the process of education a joyous adventure for children and gives them attitudes and values which would help them to find joy in the arduous and exacting work of their everyday life as adults. People who object to this view on ethical grounds have really understood the demands neither of ethics nor of psychology. Let us try to come to grips with this contentious and multi-faced conception of happiness and see what place it occupies in the life and work of mankind.

If we appealed to the naive, unsophisticated experience of the ordinary 'man in the street', whose thinking has not been over-laid with philosophical speculations, we should find that he always engages in an activity because it brings happiness in some form and abstains from an activity because it has the opposite effect. Of course, it depends very greatly on his nature and training and the trend of thought in his community whether he will find his happiness in one object and

* See Chapters I and VII.

activity or another. The factory labourer who works steadily and hard for eight or ten hours a day does not usually find his happiness in his actual work; he finds it possibly in the remuneration which enables him to purchase things to satisfy his most imperative needs or perhaps in going to the cinema or having a drink. The patient farmer who gives his devoted service to land and looks up hopefully to the sky to respond to his efforts by sending down timely rain may gain his satisfaction not only in the ultimate products of his labour and their market price but also in the immediate results of his industry—the green and swaying fields, the ever fresh miracle of life sprouting out of the apparently dead earth. For him happiness resides both in the goal of his activity as well as the activity itself; it irradiates the end as well as the means. An artist may likewise find the greater measure of his happiness in the travail of the spirit, in the adventurous reaching-out of his technique to capture the fleeting vision of his artistic imagination—even more so in these than in the completed picture or the finished statue. The scientific worker, engaged in wresting the secrets of Nature, and reading the laws which govern her varying moods and her bewildering but orderly phenomena, may find all his satisfaction in the patient research by which, through the discipline of trial and error, he approximates to truth more closely. To him the industrial applications or the financial exploitation of his discoveries may be a matter of complete indifference, if not actual distaste. These different examples bring out three facts of great interest and significance. Firstly, these different persons—from the factory hand manipulating a lever to Einstein at work in his library or laboratory—do not find their satisfaction or their happiness in one and the same activity or object. What yields happiness to one—say, money or the power to enjoy all that it can purchase—may be of very slight moment to another who may dedicate all his powers to, and derive all his happiness from, the successful development of the activity itself, regardless of its external consequences and implications. There are, therefore, grades and qualities of happiness which have differing ethical values and those

who condemn all happiness as ethically an inferior objective, are apt to ignore this consideration. As we shall see presently, the question of the ethical value of happiness is bound up with the far-reaching question of what stimuli provoke it and the nature of their moral significance.

Secondly, we must admit that, no matter what the nature and the cause of this happiness may be, if it does not motivate an activity, activity will cease to function. If the artist or the scientist gained no personal satisfaction out of his activity the paints and the brushes will lie idle, the canvas will dry up in course of time and the scientist's laboratory will remain barred and bolted. Nor will the patient hand of the farmer or the craftsman work at his trade, for if the activity brings no happiness—that is, if it is not directed by an acceptable and willingly embraced motive and does not produce consequences which the individual thinks worthwhile—where would be the use and the meaning of that activity? The only exception to this general rule would be the case of a man compelled to work under the threat of a whip or some other fear like that of starvation and even there the negative satisfaction of avoiding a painful infliction is the motive of his activity. So we must recognize that, under all circumstances, a person would normally engage in an activity only if it results in giving him some satisfaction that he would himself appreciate. Even the extreme cases of people who inflict tortures or deprivations on themselves voluntarily are no exceptions to this rule, for they differ from the ordinary people only in their subjective evaluation of happiness. If they did not feel that they were gaining happiness of a rare quality through the mortification of their bodies they would never expose themselves to those trials. The same view also explains not only the faith but the joyful self-sacrifice of the great martyrs who truly found their greatest happiness in what must appear, to the eyes of unbelief, meaningless and wicked suffering. One such martyr, dying of torture in the service of a noble cause, is reported to have replied to his questioner with his last breath:

“Death, father, is far sweeter to me than honey!”

Thirdly, it disposes of the widespread idea that happiness is synonymous with enjoyment or the pleasures of the body and the senses. Both the stern moralist and the self-indulgent pleasure-seeker have been responsible for the spread of this wrong conception, the former by his vehement invectives against it, the latter by his stupidity, his weakness, and his narrowness of mind. Our daily experience belies this unwarranted interpretation of happiness, for we find that a majority of men of all classes and in all walks of life are prepared to risk their 'pleasures' in the narrow sense and to subject themselves to hardships, joyfully and willingly, in the pursuit of their cherished ends. The school boy scratching his knees and hands in the attempt to collect birds' eggs, the explorer risking comfort and peace, his very life, in trying to penetrate into unknown regions of the world, the scientist playing with dangerous gases and poisons to extend the domains of knowledge, the prophet accepting the rebuffs and ridicule and persecution of his misguided community are all examples, on different levels, of the same fundamental truth—namely, that people will suffer gladly in the interest of causes that they hold dear. And the more intelligently, rationally and wholeheartedly these causes are cherished and appreciated the greater will be their success in resisting and overcoming all distractions and temptations that beset their path. So, while their quest for happiness remains a constant factor, providing the motive force for activity, their emotions and ideals attach themselves to new interests and pursuits in the achievement of which they find their highest and most abiding satisfaction, and all the hardships and suffering and self-restraint which they have to incur are accepted joyfully as necessary incidents in a developing experience that is intrinsically worthwhile. In analysing, therefore, the conception of happiness we must purge it of these unworthy associations that have gathered round it, so much so that both the popular mind and ethical doctrinaires have come to interpret it in its most limited and least satisfying sense. In the true sense of the word, however, we are justified in the belief that the quest for happiness is an essential ingredient of human nature, that it is not opposed

to, or inconsistent with, the idea of effort and hardships, and that it may quite conceivably lead to a pursuit of the highest values in life and need not necessarily direct human activity only towards the satisfaction of material interests and carnal desires. Educationally, therefore, the problem is not whether happiness should or should not be considered a desirable end but whether happiness is derived from an ethically superior or inferior plane of activity, and how the right association can be planted in the human mind.

2

What are the causes which are generally responsible for the unhappiness so common in the lives of men and women of today? The problem is an urgent one, because there is no doubt whatever that, in spite of the great advancement of science and the comparative improvement in many persons' material conditions, there is growing unrest and discontent embittering their lives, and, often for psychological reasons, they are unable to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities and possibilities which the conquests of science have opened out for them. Nor is this discontent, this sense of incompleteness in life, the monopoly of those who have been denied the fruits of education; as already pointed out, the educated classes are equally, if not more, a prey to this feeling of unrest and unhappiness. In so far as this unhappiness is the result of widespread economic and social injustices and maladjustments due to the unlovely anomalies of the capitalist system, it is obvious that, unless certain minimum conditions of material comfort are fulfilled and the satisfaction of material wants is ensured, the average man cannot rise beyond the stage of animal existence, and for him the question of any higher satisfaction does not arise. Such conditions are the provision of a reasonable modicum of food and shelter and the enjoyment of good health and social fellowship, including normal sex and family life. The satisfaction of these wants is part of the biological demands of life and it is the business of society and the State to see that these are available for all

the citizens in a reasonable measure. To the extent that groups of individuals suffer from serious want in this respect, the collective life of society will remain ill organized and its resources maldistributed. It should be the serious endeavour of all well-wishers of humanity to deal properly and justly with this explosive situation. Our present preoccupation, however, is with those *psychological* causes and attitudes which are largely within the individual's own control and which often make or mar a man's life irrevocably. Thus an individual who suffers from certain inhibitions and complexes like fear or blind self-absorption may lead an extremely miserable and incomplete life although he may possess material comforts and may be in a position to satisfy all his reasonable, and possibly many of his unreasonable, wants as well! On the other hand, the creation and development of right attitudes and interests towards life may enable an individual to extract considerable degree of satisfaction, even of positive happiness, out of apparently unfavourable and unfortunate circumstances. There have been cases of people suffering from all kinds of material privations and disabilities who have made a good bargain of their lives, enriching not only their own personality but also those with whom they have come into contact. The story of Helen Keller is certainly unusual but not exceptional.

Perhaps the most potent source of unhappiness in life is an attitude of exclusive absorption with one's own self and the many petty interests which centre round it.* An individual whose thoughts and emotions are constantly preoccupied with his own ego is at the mercy of every chance mishap that befalls him and to him are denied all those compensations which make the severest of personal afflictions and sorrows tolerable for a man of wide cultural and human interests. For, disease, poverty, social disapproval and death are matters of everyday occurrence and no individual who lives in this world can hope to escape these visitations. To the selfish, self-centred egoist these personal misfortunes are not just temporary annoyances,

* Bertrand Russell's *Conquest of Happiness* provides an excellent discussion of this theme.

to be taken as part of the pattern of life; they become for him the death-knell of mental peace and tend to paralyse the progress of his normal activity. He develops the mentality of fear and faces life with the outlook of a miser. Instead of trying to accept boldly the varied opportunities and experiences of life—the rough with the smooth, the pleasant with the unpleasant—and drawing strength and inspiration and gaining enrichment of personality from them, he shirks these encounters and, crouching within the trembling shelter of his own narrow self, apprehensively counts his small store of blessings, afraid that they will be taken away by an unkind Providence and there will be nothing left for him! Cowards die many times before their death, said Shakespeare, and it is in this spiritual sense that the cowardly egoist suffers death over and over again. He is devoted to what Bertrand Russell has called ‘possessive happiness’, a type of happiness which depends for its maintenance on the acquisition of external things—wealth, power, competitive success—and is destroyed if these are taken away. As against this attitude towards life there is another, which is not interested so much in ‘possessive’ as in ‘creative’ happiness, not in ‘taking-in’ but in ‘giving-out’—the giving out of the self in the service of great causes and purposes which appeal to one’s imagination and devotion. The individual who has this attitude does not look upon his own ego and its petty interests as the centre of his Universe or, rather, as a self-contained and self-centred entity pitted against the rest of the world. He finds his highest satisfaction and self-realization in taking part in the rich and multifarious life of the world; he enters boldly and whole-heartedly into the interests and forces which move his fellow men; he is sensitive and responsive to the pulsating life of society. Or, alternatively, he may adopt a *particular* sphere of human activity as his own—some art or science or social service—and make up through *intensity* of participation for the limitations which he has put on the scope of his work. By thus becoming a part of the general stream of human experience he expands the scope of his own ego which now partakes, so to speak, of the depth, the significance and the permanence

which characterize the life of mankind as a whole. The small tragedies and misfortunes which affect him only in a personal capacity are now reduced to their proper proportion. They are real and poignant, no doubt, but they do not obscure the meaning of his existence or destroy the clarity of his vision, for he is now the servant of some greater cause, the instrument of some greater purpose. So long as these purposes continue to thrive, and his efforts, whether painful or pleasant, minister to their success he is happy. He has the joy of self-expression and self-realisation; for, by losing himself in movements far greater than his own self, he re-discovers himself in a very real sense. This exposes the fallacy of the hedonist who devotes himself to the direct pursuit of happiness—which turns out to be the pursuit of a mirage—instead of losing himself in work of a congenial nature which may bring all of his power and impulses into adequate and useful play. Work, undertaken in this spirit and for the service of great interests lying outside our own selves, does not savour of drudgery; it does not demand a superficially imposed self-denial, a discipline which is not the outcome, but the antithesis of freedom. "In fact", says Russell, "the whole antithesis between self and the rest of the world which is implied in the doctrine of self-denial disappears as soon as we have any genuine interest in persons or things outside ourselves. Through such interests a man comes to feel himself part of the stream of life, not a hard separate entity like a billiard ball which can have no relation with other such entities except that of collision."*

It must, however, be conceded that, if the education of an individual has been defective and if his social environment is unlikely to give him glimpses of any higher or better ideals, he may quite conceivably find his happiness in limited and petty interests. Such is actually the case with a majority of people in the world at present. But the trend of my argument is that such happiness also will be necessarily limited and petty and of an inferior quality and it will depend on such transitory and unreliable factors that any ordinary mishap

* *Conquest of Happiness*, p. 247.

may completely shatter the laboriously constructed edifice. On the other hand if, through education and self-discipline, the individual learns gradually to seek and find his happiness in the whole-hearted effort towards great and worthy ends, he will not be at the mercy of every chance misfortune. If, for example, he is working, for a great social or political purpose of far-reaching human significance, nothing short of a great disaster or the failure of the entire movement will shake his faith and optimism, and even then he will be left with the satisfaction of having nobly loved and nobly lost. That is the kind of spiritual strength that has sustained great prophets and great servants of mankind like Mahatma Gandhi in their lives of travail. But, for the man whose entire energies and interests are focussed on securing a small job or getting the better of a rival in a small commercial deal or keeping his temperature at 97.8° , failure in his particular little effort will mean a death-blow to his happiness and peace of mind. In a novel of remarkable power, *Three Cities* by Scholem Asch, an old Jew, steeped in the wisdom of the ages, exhorts his young listener in words which will bear repetition:

"The world is a living entity just as much as the tiniest organism . . . we do not see it because we are a tiny strand in the great fabric, because we are so sunk in the emptiness, the petty nothings of our individual existence that we have no time to perceive the greater life. Like worms we have crept into the dark caverns, the narrow gloomy passages of our individual existences and have no time left to rise into the clear, radiant world and to gaze at the mighty sun and the living light. Rise out of yourself, young man; tear yourself away from the darkness of your own petty life; then you will see the light, will feel the mighty pulse, the great heart-beat of the world."

In this busy, practical age, impatient of rhetoric, anxious for quick returns and cynical of prophetic utterances, this may be dismissed as merely high-flown rhetoric. But I am convinced that this lesson is persistently and emphatically

needed for the present age when the pressure of economic and political forces threatens to disrupt the ties which bind the individual to the general life of humanity. It is necessary, however, to understand that this view does *not* seek to belittle the infinite value and significance of individual life. It really demands that individuality should gain in breadth and richness by being steeped into the greater life of mankind. That is what the greatest men of the East—the prophets and Sufis (mystics) and thinkers—have always thought: this losing of the self in a greater self and thereby gaining a more powerful individuality. On a more familiar plane, do we not see that the greatest poets and writers and philosophers have been those whose heart-beats coincided with 'the heart-beats of the world', and whose pulses beat in unison with its pulse-beats?

It is this same approach to life which eliminates another great and almost universal cause of unhappiness—Fear. The fear of the Lord may quite conceivably be the beginning of wisdom, but if it becomes a permanent attitude of the mind, if a person shirks entering into the experiences, the risks and the adventures of life because he is afraid of possible consequences, then his life becomes incomplete, psychologically distorted and unhappy. For, the world swarms with occasions which demand courage, and, if one does not accept boldly what the revolving wheel of life has to offer, determined to make the best of it, one is apt to live in constant apprehension of possible misfortune. An Indian poet has expressed this courageous attitude in words which, rendered into English, are almost identical with the maxim: The secret of a joyous life is to live dangerously. Such an attitude of mind is helpful to the individual in two ways in gaining a sense of happiness. It protects him from the continuous and timid anticipation of the misfortunes which the morrow may never bring, an anticipation which robs a man of all peace of mind and paralyses his powers of action. Secondly, when he is confronted with a difficult or painful situation, he goes out boldly to meet it, reasonably hopeful if not quite confident of overcoming it by his courage and industry. He even finds a certain satisfaction

and thrill in facing difficulties and dangers and, of course, experiences joy in conquering them. But courage or absence of fear has a wider connotation here than the mere capacity to face dangers boldly and not show nervousness when confronting them. "It is not so much fear in the ordinary sense", says Dewey, "as it is an attitude of withdrawal, an attitude of exclusiveness which shuts out the beauties and troubles of experience as the things from which alone we can really learn and go on growing."* He insists on the development of a positive attitude of thought and emotions: that of "going out to and welcoming all the incidents of a changing experience, even those which are in themselves troublesome". It is the difference between those who say 'yes' to life, with all its difficulties, trials and temptations, who are prepared to throw themselves into the possibilities which it has to offer, without counting the cost like misers, and those who fight shy of it, because there may be dangers lurking in new experiences and undertakings. The mental and emotional attitudes which dominate the latter are a source of great unhappiness because they cause nervous apprehension at every step and tend to cramp and fetter our capacity for action. It is not enough, however, to suppress the obvious *manifestations* of fear, for if that is done by an act of strong and conscious will, the feeling of fear may be driven underground and assume a domination over our unconscious mind, appearing in unrecognizable but potent forms and embittering the whole of our life. Psycho-analysis warns us seriously against the pernicious influence of repressed complexes, whether of fear or other strong emotions and points out that a good deal of modern unhappiness is due to the emotional conflicts and repressions and the lack of harmony which characterize the present life of individuals and groups. These conflicts cannot be overcome unless we develop *positive courage* in ourselves which is not only physical but also intellectual and moral. Several psychological factors are involved in the creation of this positive attitude of courage in the larger sense, which not only includes the facing of physical dangers boldly but also the

* Dewey: *The Man and His Philosophy*.

capacity to resist the temptation to seek social approval at the sacrifice of one's freedom of thought and action. For, the fear that dominates our life is just as much physical as that of the displeasure of the herd; we try in all sorts of ways to court the approval of the herd and to avoid its censure. Within certain limits, this motive is useful in the formation of character and helps to socialize the individual. Carried to extremes, it produces the colourless, self-effacing, cowardly person who has no courage of his convictions, who deliberately suppresses his individuality lest it should incur the hostility of the group or assumes an attitude of hypocrisy, which is a subtle and dishonest form of fear and which persuades him to hide his true feelings and opinions in favour of those which happen to be popular. The courage that we should inculcate in our children is a general attitude of mind and behaviour which permeates the entire life of the individual, equipping him with the capacity to face external dangers as well as subjective conflicts and temptations whose control is only possible through arduous self-discipline on his part.

The creation of this attitude is dependent on two factors, one of which we have already discussed—namely, the development of impersonal and objective interests which give greater depth and breadth to one's personality and free it from the overpowering sense of fear that often dominates the life of the selfish and self-centred egoist. The man who finds an adequate outlet for his powers in various healthy and useful interests, who throws himself whole-heartedly into the service of great causes, even overcomes the paralysing fear of death, for he is not foolish or petty-minded enough to imagine that his physical death will be the end of the Universe. He has the genuine conviction that his work will be carried on, without a break, by his successors and he will live in the ultimate triumph of his great purpose. By uniting his life with that of humanity, and in a sense, losing himself in it, he gains a true, if vicarious, immortality. It is in this sense that the poet Iqbal linked the life of the individual with that of the community: "The individual exists because of the bonds

that link him up with the community—alone, he is naught! Even as the wave has an entity as part of the river—outside it, it is naught!” It is in this sense, again, that the ‘martyr’, the man who lives and dies in the path of the Lord, achieves immortality: “And do not call them dead who give their lives in the path of Allah; they live and, before their Creator, their deeds bear fruit.” (The Holy Quran)

The second factor which, according to Russell, is an essential constituent of true courage is a feeling of genuine self-respect. Real self-respect does not rest on, or result in, a selfish snobbishness or intolerance of others; it is the fruit of the quiet conviction that potentially our individuality is infinitely precious, that we are gifted by nature with the inalienable right to think our own thoughts and do our own deeds on the basis of our own firsthand experience, our knowledge and our sense of right and wrong. Anyone, who surrenders this ultimate freedom for the sake of expediency or social approval, can never attain the greatness of true courage; to him, Socrates will always be an inexplicable monomaniac who foolishly preferred a cup of poison to the ‘mere’ renunciation of his true opinions. His thoughts and actions will be a pale and hesitant reflection of his particular society and he will never achieve emancipation from the dark kingdom of fear.

From the foregoing discussion, we can see how a good deal of modern unhappiness is due to the emotional conflicts and repressions from which our generation is suffering. The absence of freedom in the home and the school, the thousand subtle but powerful ways in which social coercion fetters the mind and the conduct of the individual, the early repression of emotional tendencies and the consequent formation of complexes—all these hinder the normal, healthy development of individual lives. This situation is apt to become particularly acute when the forms and conventions of an old and established social order become out-of-date by the march of events and, instead of disciplining and guiding social energy into effective channels, arrest the natural flow of social energy altogether. This is what is happening today in India and indeed, to varying degrees, in the whole world. The modern

political, economic and social forces have created literally a new world where time and space have been practically abolished and many of the geographical and racial facts, on which our cherished theories and assumptions were based, have ceased to exist. But our thinking continues to move along the old, obsolete grooves; our loyalties are still absurdly narrow and our conception of human kinship and interdependence altogether vague and weak. In India, for example, the caste system is still a force to be reckoned with; political divisions are still based on religious and social rather than economic cleavages; ideas which might have been useful in the fading feudal order still seek to impose their stifling sway on the modern age. The various institutions of society pull the individual in different directions and tend to split up the unity and integrity of his personal life. The economic urges often conflict with the religious, and political loyalties are at loggerheads with communal attachments. Little wonder, then, that the bewildered youth, who passes out of the comparatively secluded world of the school into the disorganized world outside, loses his balance and fails to attain the sense of being at peace with himself or his environment. The problem of how a better orientation can be secured is immensely complex, almost baffling, but a mere reference to its scope should make it clear that it cannot be tackled in schools alone and that, unless the entire set-up of social institutions supplements educational effort, the results will be utterly disappointing.

Lastly, but not in order of importance, an obvious and insistent cause of modern unhappiness is the economic and vocational malorganisation of society which deprives millions of people of the chance of doing any useful and congenial work. In this class must be included not only the unemployed who in the 'civilized' countries live on the 'dole' and in others on private charity or starvation, but also the mass of workers who do manage to earn their living somehow but whose occupations are not only poorly paid but totally uncongenial, leading them to uninviting blind-alleys. People generally realize how quickly a state of worklessness thoroughly demoralizes a person, sapping his sense of self-confidence and

self-respect. But there is not the same general recognition of the incalculable social and individual harm that is done by the fact that most workers are compelled to slave at unsuitable tasks for which they are intellectually and temperamentally unfitted. This misfortune oppresses the educated classes even more pointedly, although from them we should normally expect not only a higher standard of work but also a higher standard of satisfaction in their work. While the average Indian peasant or craftsman—where he has not been replaced by the machine—does often manage to find a certain amount of satisfaction and absorption within the narrow circle of his activity and interests, the average 'black-coated' or white-clothed product of the school or the college, slaving at the office desk or in the depressing atmosphere of law courts, is unable to find any genuine self-expression in his work—it has no meaning or inward significance for him beyond the fact that it brings him a petty remuneration. The result is that his whole life is over-weighted with a sense of failure—failure to make the best of his powers and aptitudes, failure to achieve either individual recognition or the sense of social service. Thus the loss of the country is twofold. On the one hand, unemployment amongst the educated classes decreases the total productive capacity of the nation, on the material as well as the intellectual side. On the other hand, the misdirection or partial exploitation of the energies of those who manage to get some employment reduces national output still further and has a most undesirable influence on their character and temperament. For, the outlook and character of a person are forged on the anvil of everyday work and, if this work is creatively and psychologically unsatisfying, he begins to suffer from a cumulative sense of frustration. The poignancy as well as the immensity of the problem make it one of the greatest, if not the greatest, social and educational issue of the modern age, requiring the closest co-operation and concerted action on the part of the schools, the Universities, the State and the captains of industry and business, and the simultaneous reorganization of education as well as the economic system along more rational lines. The opportunity

of a 'calling'—in the real sense of the word—which makes a genuine appeal to the worker is one of the primary conditions of a full and happy life and, so long as this opportunity is wholly or partly denied to a large proportion of men and women, they can never gain true happiness and there can be no social peace.

Chapter VI

EDUCATION FOR HAPPINESS (II)

AFTER this analysis of the main causes of unhappiness in life—an analysis that is not exhaustive but selects only certain outstanding features—we are confronted with the question: What can education do to remedy and improve the situation that has been revealed? Before defining the function and possibilities of education as an instrument for the resolution of the psychological and social conflicts which cause unhappiness, we must again stress the fact that education by itself cannot easily make over our subjective and objective world. The youth as well as the adult is being constantly subjected to the influence of varied and complex social forces which powerfully determine the course of his development—more powerfully than the school or the college could do. Educational theory has often, in the course of history, been inspired by ideals which were ahead of the existing social situation but practice has either lagged behind theory or the good influence of the school has been undone by the forces of the social situation. It has been successful in vitally transforming national character on a large scale only when it has synchronized, and been in harmony, with some great political, social or religious movement which has shaken the life of a community to its very foundations. Such was, for example, the transformation brought about in the Arabian society as a result of the advent of Islam or the educational advance that followed the American Revolution or, nearer to our times, by the Russian Revolution after World War I, or, in a limited and incomplete measure, the impact of the Gandhian movement on our national life which has not yet been fully worked out. With this reservation in mind, we can proceed to indicate briefly the directions along which education may endeavour to reorient itself for the attainment of this end.

We have seen that an attitude of exclusive self-absorption

is one of the most potent causes of unhappiness. Our education, as at present organized, does not eradicate but tends rather to strengthen this attitude. This is due to the fact that the living relationship between education and national culture and religion has been greatly weakened and, therefore, the general feeling has grown that education is merely a means for the improvement of one's material or economic position. Viewed in this light, education will, naturally and perhaps quite reasonably, be dominated by the spirit of selfish competition and personal aggrandizement. Its method of teaching and discipline and its general organization all stress the individual aspect of the child's life and prize competitive success above social service. Learning is a process of 'taking-in' which is not only a passive affair but one that is exclusive and individual in its essence; it does not partake of the nature of a co-operative activity in which the individual 'gives himself out' to the service of jointly conceived or accepted purposes. Moreover, the poverty and narrowness of the subject-matter taught and the formal nature of most school work make it difficult, if not impossible, for children to cultivate rich and varied interests which may add to their personal culture or provide opportunities for social work and thus prove a source of happy preoccupation in later life.

The remedy for this situation lies in the enriching of the school curriculum as well as its many extra-curricular activities through which children satisfy their varied interests. Some concrete suggestions have been given about it in a preceding chapter.* The object of this approach should be to encourage children to throw themselves into all worthy forms of activity—literary, artistic, social and manual—so that they may learn to get out of their own selves and cultivate valuable objective interests which may be carried further and developed after their leaving the school. This broadening of intellectual and cultural curiosity, this quickening of sympathy for all that concerns human life is a perennial and inexpensive source of happiness which it is the business of schools and colleges to encourage. Through learning to take an appre-

* See Chapter III.

ciative interest in literature and poetry, through absorption in some form of art or craft or social service the whole quality of individual life can be raised and its significance enriched. Personal culture has been defined, from one point of view, as an 'increased apprehension of meanings', i.e. it is the capacity of an individual to find greater significance and derive deeper pleasure from the experiences and objects of everyday life whose full import is not grasped by an uncultured mind. Thus, to the artistic eye, the glorious procession of seasons, the phenomena of sunrise and sunset, the golden corn waving in the breeze, the dance of the daffodils on the hill side—in fact, all things of beauty are a joy for ever. Likewise, one whose heart and mind have been quickened to feel sympathy with great human purposes and movements finds unsuspected happiness in serving them. By bringing the child into actual contact with beautiful objects we can awaken his aesthetic taste and lay the foundation of artistic interests. By the study and discussion of living social problems and by organizing the school into a free, social environment where there is mutual give-and-take and a practical sharing of duties and responsibilities, we can bring him to a consciousness of the social forces and an understanding of the principles of co-operative living. The secondary schools, the colleges and the universities, should carry this social and political orientation of the adolescent further and, through their study groups, discussions and class-teaching, they should strengthen his human interests, so that he comes to offer his emotional and intellectual allegiance to some great and worthy purpose. The incompleteness and failure of much modern education is due to the fact that it does not inculcate loyalty to any great impersonal ideals but is content to provide a superficial smattering of knowledge and pseudo-culture and, at best, stimulates the desire to 'get-on' in the world at all costs. This modern attitude of 'externalism', the desire to seek happiness in the possession of external things like money or degrees or cheap popularity, makes us helplessly dependent on material factors and, in course of time, dries up the rich and invaluable sources of joy that are embedded in our own selves. It is

the old folly of trying to gain the whole world at the expense of one's own soul—with the result that we become dead to great human interests, which we cultivate neither in our own life nor in that of our children. "The world is either a wonderful scene or a dismal one according to whether we bring wonder with us into it or the desire to possess as much of it as is possible in as short a time as possible. What we bring to the world in which we live has gone and always will, at last, go back to the depths of our own beings."* The cultivation of these rich, varied and worthy interests that we have advocated will add richness and fullness to our being and thus transform for us the very world in which we are living.

What can education do to weaken the hold of fear on individuals, to develop positive courage and to resolve the emotional conflicts which work within the children and the adolescents? We have, in general terms, already referred to the psychological factors involved in this process—the creation of a strong sense of self-respect in children which would gradually teach them to reject whatever is low and inferior as unworthy of them and their ideal of self, the cultivation of objective interests and of an impersonal outlook on life. The former demands from teachers an unhesitating rejection of all methods of teaching and all devices of discipline which injure the child's self-respect. In the past, the ingenuity of teachers has been exercised far too much in thinking out such methods and devices—with the good intention, of course, of making the backward boys and the defaulters ashamed of themselves! But the invariable result is either a loss of self-confidence and a consequent attitude of timidity or a loss of sensitiveness. It is time that the teachers tried the opposite method of strengthening self-respect in their pupils by encouraging their good work and creating in them the habit of unconsciously relating all their performances—in learning as well as conduct—with the ideal of self they have placed before themselves. So far as the expansion of one's personality through the cultivation of objective interests is concerned, as

* Dewey: *The Man and his Philosophy*.

an antidote to the feeling of perpetual fear, we have already discussed its relationship to education viewed as a rich, creative activity. The school or the college that opens up fresh vistas of interests before the growing youth establishes new points of contact between him and the great world that environs him and tends to transfer the emphasis of his emotions and thoughts from the egocentric to the impersonal. While in school this process will be on the unconscious, or the sub-conscious, plane—the child throwing himself wholeheartedly and spontaneously into many co-operative activities—it is the business of the college and the university to make this a conscious and deliberately chosen attitude and, for this purpose, not only their academic teaching but the powerful array of personal and group influences should be set in motion and utilized.

This right orientation of education and social life in schools is not enough, by itself, to eradicate the domination of fear and resolve emotional conflicts. These are due not only to bad teaching but also, and in a large measure, to many repressed complexes which are formed in childhood and adolescence through a system of repressive discipline. The development of a normal, healthy and frank disposition requires an atmosphere of freedom, an emancipation from the feeling that one's life is hedged round on all sides by external inhibitions and restrictions. Discipline is effective and educative only to the extent that its checks are taken up into the child's own being and transformed from externally imposed into voluntarily accepted, *inner* compulsions. But this condition is satisfied neither in the home, nor in the school, nor in the relationships of other social institutions. The parents, the teachers as well as other social authorities exercise their power autocratically and the sanction behind them, more or less thinly veiled, is force. The result is that they are able to secure, at best, only external conformity of behaviour. While outwardly abiding by the social conventions and accepting the social standards, the child's emotional life runs its independent course, often seething with a desire for revolt, for breaking down the barriers imposed on it. At home

and in school one finds confirmation of this emotional conflict in the occasional outbreaks of temper and bursts of destructive mischief which occur in children, to the great surprise and annoyance of the self-complacent parents and teachers. Later, in adult life, the social bonds sit heavily on the individual. Even when he fails to accept them as being in harmony with his own needs and nature—as is often the case—he has to accept them because of the powerful sanctions of force and social usage behind them. But, while actions and conduct may be enslaved by rules and regulations, thought and emotions are, in their essence, free—hence the emotional conflicts and the fear which warp most persons' life. The problem of reorganization is, therefore, just as much social as educational and must be based on a greater faith in the free expression of individuality than society has so far been willing to concede. Even where a state of war or excessive social and economic disorganization or political disintegration may demand a rigid regimentation of general life—as has happened often enough in history—it can only be accepted very reluctantly as a temporary, 'war-time' measure. It can be justified only if it results in bringing about ultimately greater freedom and a greater release of the individual's creative activity and can successfully abolish the domination of fear. Otherwise, bringing as it certainly does great unhappiness and a sense of imprisonment in its train, it should be unacceptable even as a temporary expedient.

Finally, let us face the problem of vocational malorganization, responsible, quantitatively speaking, for the greatest measure of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in the modern world. In so far as its remedy lies in the better ordering and direction of economic and industrial life, it is an immense problem which lies beyond our present scope; for, it involves the complicated questions of hours of work and wages, elimination of drudgery, better distribution of wealth, a more just sharing of industrial control and a truce to the shameless exploitation of workers as a mere means to the ends of others. But even if we confine ourselves to the educational aspect, it bristles with difficulties and has given rise to greater

differences of opinion than almost any other educational question. Should education train directly for vocational work? What are the comparative values of general and vocational education? At what stage should specialization commence? These and other similar questions involve many theoretical considerations as well as the practical questions of curriculum, policy and organization which cannot be adequately considered here in all their bearings. I shall state somewhat baldly and, therefore, rather dogmatically my own views on the subject.

There is no doubt that Indian education has been far too bookish and academic, narrowly 'vocational' in the sense that it trained students mainly for a limited number of clerical jobs and a few learned professions and too 'general'—I would not use the word 'liberal'—in the sense that it has been out of touch with the economic and industrial life of the country. There is general dissatisfaction with the results it has so far produced—unemployment, overcrowding of colleges and universities with ill-equipped students, disproportionate rush on a few services to the comparative neglect of other lines of productive activity, etc. There is reason and common sense behind the popular demand that education should become more practical and realistic so that many of the pupils who pass out of the primary and secondary stages of education may enter into appropriate lines of useful vocational work. It is a very serious criticism against the educational system—made as far back as Pascal but applicable undeniably to Indian education today—that while "a man's choice of his trade is the most important thing in his life this crucial choice is about the one thing for which our public system of education has made hardly any attempt to prepare its pupils. This is surely the craziest phenomena of a crazy world."*

While agreeing, therefore, with the general demand to introduce vocational work in schools we cannot altogether endorse the popularly advocated corollary that our schools should become definitely technical and commercial schools,

* Lord Percy in his *Introduction to Ammott's Education for Industry and Commerce in England*.

training directly for certain lines of vocational work. Such a change will seriously impair the efficiency of schools as instruments of culture and, while they may produce efficiency in a narrow sense, they will weaken those inner sources of appreciation and enjoyment on which individual happiness greatly depends. The introduction of vocational features should, therefore, be welcomed, *not* because it will produce better typists or carpenters or smiths but because it will give valuable vocational bias and, if properly utilized, educate children's practical and productive aptitudes which are apt to be neglected in the present system of education. Moreover, the higher ranks of industry, manufactures and commerce, etc. require today a wider background of general knowledge and training, because their intellectual and scientific content has been enriched by modern inventions. This naturally calls for greater adaptability, resourcefulness and more highly specialized knowledge on the part of the workers. Thus, in the interest of 'culture' as well as a far-sighted policy of 'efficiency', a wide, comprehensive education, embracing the academic as well as the practical subjects, should precede specialized technical training. The length of this 'general' education will, of course, differ for the pupils in accordance with the nature and demands of the vocation that they are destined to enter, some branching off into work at the end of elementary school stage, others doing so at the conclusion of the secondary stage, while still others destined for certain 'learned' professions will carry on their general or partially specialized studies at the university. In most of the advanced western countries, the present tendency is to ensure some type of education for all children up to the age of eighteen, whether that education, in its later stages, is provided in a full-time secondary school or in a part-time continuation school. In our own country, at present, where compulsory elementary education has not been introduced on a national scale and a proper integration of the various stages of education is still being worked out, the immediate problem is to deal with children passing out of the elementary or secondary schools, with special reference to their aptitudes and the possible openings avail-

able in any particular locality.

In the move to make education 'vocational', there is a conspicuous lack of clear thinking. Besides the general criticism that it is narrowly conceived the scheme is open to the objection that it does not take into conscious account the psychological aptitudes of children, nor does it include a vocational survey of particular localities with a view to discovering the available occupations and the kind of training required. The problem of vocational guidance is an essential part of any sound scheme of vocational education but, so far as our country is concerned, there is no adequate provision yet to meet this need or even, in some cases, a clear recognition of its imperative nature. In all the States, schemes have been drawn up for the reorganization of secondary education. But, while the Central Government has made a beginning in this direction and helped a few States to set up Bureaus of Educational and Vocational Guidance, in many States this essential service is yet to be provided. At the secondary stage, it has been decided to introduce a variety of vocational courses—Commercial, Technical, Agricultural, Art and Domestic Science—and a number of 'multipurpose' schools have been and are being set up under the Five-Year Plans. But, unless there is a careful assessment of the aptitudes of children at this stage of transition and the results of the investigation are supplemented with a study of their school records and the opinions of parents and teachers there will be no safeguard against their drifting into uncongenial lines of work and not much improvement will result from the proposed changes. In many European countries and in America, the technique of vocational guidance has passed the experimental stage and is officially recognized as an invaluable intermediary between education and industry. Thus, in England, the Institute of Industrial Psychology has developed carefully devised techniques of vocational testing. It advises parents on the vexed question of their children's future, pointing out what lines of work they are likely to find most congenial. It also provides for a 'follow up' of the careers of young workers in order to assess the validity of their tests

and, after about ten years of this work, it has come definitely to the conclusion that such vocational guidance is a genuine help to young workers who might otherwise have become 'foiled circuitous wanderers', knocking about from one occupation to another, denied individual satisfaction as well as the chance of rendering the fullest social service of which they are capable. Taking a fairly large number of youths as the basis of their observations it was discovered after a 'follow-up' of their careers that, amongst those who did not take the advice of the Institute the proportion of the successful to the unsuccessful workers was fifty-fifty, i.e. it was just a matter of even chance whether one made good or failed to do so; while, amongst those who accepted the advice of the Institute, the proportion of the successful to the unsuccessful was ninety to ten!

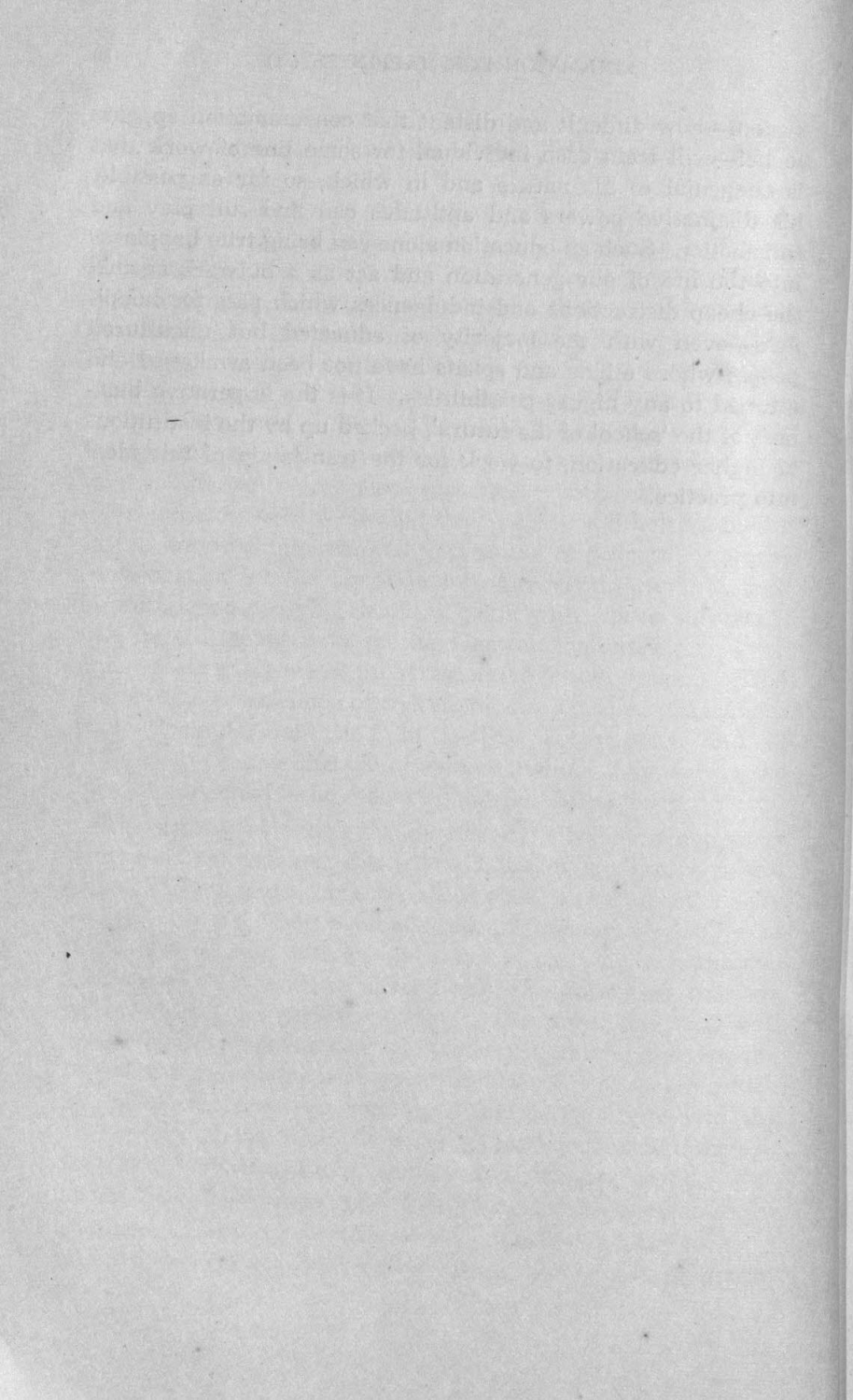
It is, therefore, essential that, at this critical stage of our educational development, when the whole system is being overhauled with the object of making it more definitely vocational, we should not be betrayed into a haphazard policy guided solely by an unintelligent reaction against the existing educational pattern. The object of general as well as vocational education is to produce individuals who will lead useful, satisfied, well-adjusted and 'abundant' lives in their special environment. If vocational education does not take into account the special aptitudes and inclinations of the workers, if it continues to fit square pegs into round holes, if it is dominated solely by the narrowly conceived idea of economic efficiency and not by the idea of 'human salvage' it will neither secure individual happiness nor promote that efficiency which is its conscious object. Carlyle has expressed, with his characteristic force, the true function of properly chosen work in the life of men and women, stressing the truth that whole-hearted absorption in a congenial pursuit is the highest bliss available to man. "All true work is sacred. In all true work, were it but true hand labour, there is something of divineness. . . . The latest gospel in the world is 'Know thy work and do it'. . . . Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness." 'True' work here implies work that is

congenial to the individual, inasmuch as he can find self-expression through it, and also socially worthy and useful for the community.

With the other factor on which vocational guidance depends, i.e. a survey of available resources in industries, crafts and other occupations, we cannot deal here adequately. But it is obvious that the problem cannot be solved with reference to one pole of the process only: the individual child and his aptitudes. It must take into account the needs of the locality and the country and the likely openings for educated workers in the near future. For this purpose regional surveys of vocational requirements will be necessary, carried out by local Institutes of vocational guidance, which will collate the various factors before offering their expert and helpful advice to the entrants into various vocations. A proposal is under consideration for the appointment of career masters, at least in multipurpose High Schools to begin with whose business it will be to supply data to the Central Institutes and work under their guidance in their respective school systems. Then there will be some hope of redeeming our schooled generations from unemployment and blind-alley occupations, and of bringing into their life true happiness which, I repeat, is the fruit of congenial, whole-hearted purposeful activity.

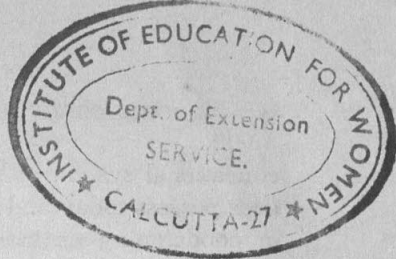
This survey of education, dedicated to bringing happiness into the distorted and discontented life of modern men and women, has taken us far afield. But such inter-connections are woven into the texture of educational questions which deal with the organic human personality on which numerous influences play from all directions. The education that we advocate and should strive for is, therefore, one that will create healthy interests of work and leisure and link up the life of the individual with great and worthy purposes which transcend his own ego and bring him into unison with the larger life of mankind. It is an education that will banish fear as a normal attitude of mind and thus eradicate, so far as possible, the repressions and emotional conflicts which social coercion engenders. It will be an education which, in close and well-meaning co-operation with a humanized industrial

system—how difficult and distant that consummation appears to be!—will train each individual for some line of work that is congenial to his nature and in which, so far as possible, his distinctive powers and aptitudes can find full play and satisfaction. Such an education alone can bring true happiness into the life of our generation and act as a bulwark against the cheap distractions and indulgences which pass for happiness—even with the majority of educated but uncultured people whose minds and spirits have not been awakened and attuned to any higher possibilities. It is the imperative business of the 'school of the future', backed up by the institutions of higher education, to work for the translation of this ideal into practice.



PART TWO

NEW TRENDS AND APPROACHES



Chapter VII

A PLEA FOR A GENEROUS VISION *

I FEEL greatly honoured at the invitation of the Osmania University to deliver this year's Extension Lectures on Education. I cannot possibly flatter myself into the belief that this distinguished audience, consisting of university men and others, has assembled here to listen to the particular speaker who happens to be addressing you at the moment. I interpret your presence here, therefore, as an evidence of the increasing importance which is being assigned to education in this age as a form of social endeavour without which no plan of social or economic or moral reconstruction stands any chance of success. This change of outlook is a source of special pleasure to me because I have always been greatly exercised over the fact that, in modern India, there is not yet an adequate appreciation of the value of education, although traditionally Indians have always prized education and learning as supreme values in life. While it is true to say that, in the past, *all* social services in India have been starved, as compared to other countries, education has unfortunately been the very Cinderella of Social Services and no good fairy has yet discovered her possibilities! Perhaps a reference to the educational situation in India and Great Britain in this respect may underline this glaring contrast. During the anxious and exacting years of the last war, the British Parliament placed on the Statute Book a new Education Act which would establish, for the first time, real equality of opportunity in the educational field and, incidentally, add a hundred million pounds to its budget. Many people in India, on the other hand, were inclined to regard the Central Advisory Board's Plan of Post-War Educational Development in the country as too ambitious and idealistic, although this scheme is designed to give us, half a century hence, an

* From an Extension Lecture at the Osmania University, Hyderabad.

educational system of such amplitude as most western countries possess today and which their educational thinkers agree in condemning as inadequate and unsatisfactory. And the criticism of the scheme has been that it is too costly! People who raise this issue seem to forget that money can always be found somehow by nations for the destructive purposes of war. If they could approach the problem of social services for the people with a fraction of the sense of urgency and spirit of self-sacrifice that they show in times of war, life would not be the poor, inhospitable and shabby thing that it is for a large majority of the peoples of the world. And what heightens the sense of this tragedy is that man *has* today the power and the resources to build up a stimulating and really *educative* social environment, free from the fell sway of disease and the black shadow of ignorance and the dread of want, and planned to develop his natural gifts and capacities. But he lacks the social conscience, the will-power and the vision to do so, with the result that the human scene continues to be the despair of men of good-will and the delight of the cynics. I propose to underline here, with reference to our educational situation, the proposition that "where there is no vision, the people perish", and I shall choose Primary Education for purposes of illustration. I am doing this deliberately because I know that, while a University audience like this is interested in, and conversant with, many of the problems of Secondary and Higher Education, problems of Primary Education are hardly likely to "swim within its ken". I am anxious to elucidate the intimacy of relationship between the various stages of education and to show that, without a concerted attack on all fronts, there is no likelihood of solving the obstinate educational problem of the country. It is also well for us to remember that, in point of basic significance, magnitude and intimacy of relationship with national life, Primary Education is *more*, and not less, important than Secondary or Higher Education. It is not concerned with any particular classes or groups, but has to deal with the entire population of the country; it touches life at every point, and it has to do more with the formation of national ideology and

character than any other single activity—social, political or educational. Those of us who are connected with the great work of Primary Education should, therefore, visualize its problems and objectives, not in the context of the dark and dingy building of the rural school without adequate staff or equipment, but against the background of its ultimate ends and purposes. There is, perhaps, some danger in taking such long and imaginative views, particularly if the existing state of affairs is complacently ignored as an obstinate factor in the situation. But, to my mind, there is infinitely greater danger in preoccupation with trivial details, to the exclusion of ideas and ideals, which alone can endow them with significance. The vision of the eagle is any day preferable to that of the mole!

I need not take up much time in describing the qualitative and quantitative aspects of education in India. Even now, about 23 out of 46 million children of school-going age, which for the present purposes, I put down as 6 to 11 only, do not go to school—either there are no schools to go to or they cannot afford it or they have no appreciation of the value of schooling which, as I will show later, is not so surprising or stupid as it sounds! Of the 9 million who enter school, about 35 per cent do not stay there longer than one year which means that they cannot even acquire the barest rudiments of literacy and all the time and money spent on their education is wasted. Less than 4 million children—out of 60 million, mind you!—stay on for even as long as four years which is possibly sufficient to acquire bare literacy but certainly not to receive any useful social or civic training. Does it not show that the educational effort of the last one hundred years has been both misdirected and wasteful?

So much for the quantitative aspect. What about the *quality* of education that we have been providing? In assessing quality, it is useful to remember that there are a number of factors, material and psychological, which determine the standards of teaching in schools—not only the curriculum and methods of teaching but the whole environment, with its physical, social, aesthetic and moral elements, act and react

on the personality of the child enriching or impoverishing it as the case may be. The child's many-sided personality is moulded by the total impact of the social forces operating in this environment. So, the building and equipment of the schools, the decoration of classrooms, playground facilities, social and practical activities carried on by the children, even the printing and get-up of books, exert powerful, if unconscious, influence on their mental and emotional outlook.

Let us try and see what is the average type of primary school provided for the education of India's 23 million children. Perhaps it may be difficult for many of you, educated in this magnificently planned university—which is one of the few instances in India of imaginative vision inspiring educational buildings—to visualize the conditions under which millions of our children are being brought up in the most sensitive and formative years of their life and where they are expected to learn not only the essential rudiments of knowledge and skill but also the elements of the difficult and delicate art of living. Imagine to yourself a *kachcha* or *semi-pucca* hut of one or two rooms with bare walls and dusty floors, devoid of all furniture except perhaps a few pieces of tattered matting or rickety desks, with no facilities for washing or midday rest or meals, with no children's books or pictures or charts or appliances, except possibly a blackboard. Add to it the fact that it offers no protection against the rigours of the climate—being very hot in summer and very cold in winter—and that, in the larger schools, the rooms are overcrowded and stuffy. Imagine all this and you will have a fairly good picture of an ordinary primary school. It is in this shabby, undignified and unworthy habitation that the poor teacher is expected to 'educate' the children of the country which means, literally, to 'draw out' all their potentialities, physical, intellectual, artistic and moral. Can any child possibly develop a healthy, normal and enriched personality in such a physical environment?

What about the other requisites of a sound and progressive education? Do these exist in any reasonable measure? Let us try and scrutinize them. Perhaps the most important

single factor in the educational process is the Teacher—his education and training, his personality, his social status, his enthusiasm, his idealism and his social sense. Before pressing any high-sounding demands, on behalf of society, on the teacher, will it not be fair to ask ourselves: How does society evaluate the crucially important service which the teacher renders to it? I once advocated, in an Administration Report, the thesis—which left the Finance Department of the Government concerned incredulous and indignant—that a good criterion for judging the ethical worth of a civilization would be to find out what value it places on its teachers. Is that a very far-fetched idea? Not if we consider carefully what it is that the teacher is expected to do for us. I shall summarize the demand that society makes on the teacher not in my own words but in the well measured and unexaggerated words of Joad in his eminently readable book, *About Education*.

"The teacher trains the minds, assists the manners and shapes the morals of members of the community at their most impressionable age. He helps to form first conceptions of good and bad, social and anti-social, beautiful and ugly. He is in some part responsible for our outlook on politics. . . . What he stands for, important at all times, is of paramount importance in the deepening blackout of spiritual and intellectual values by which our age is oppressed. Not the smallest item in the debt that the community owes them is the fact that, in a philistine society, governed by the values of the stomach and the pocket, they maintain a respect for the things of the mind and try to keep alight the torch that has been entrusted to them, that they may hand it on undimmed to their successors."

If this is a fact—and I do not see how, in the case of good teachers, anyone can deny it—it is no flattering comment on our scale of values that, while we pay handsomely—in money and honours—to all those who plan death and destruction or play at being demagogues, or gamble at the stock exchange or manufacture worthless drugs or push their sales, we often pay our primary school teachers even less than

rich men pay their domestic servants. In Government primary schools, the *average* pre-war salary was about Rs. 25 per month, which means that many teachers got even less; in private schools the average salary was considerably smaller and in one province at least, it touched the magnificent sum of Rs. 8-3-0 per month! And it is not only the monetary reward that is mean and petty—the profession has never been highly paid in the past either—but there is, I am afraid, the same apathy and indifference to their social status in the community. In the village hierarchy, the teacher ranks even lower than the Patwari and the Chowkidar; for, he can only do some good to the children and can do no harm to their parents! And in our topsy-turvy world, prizes and positions are reserved not for those who do only unostentatious social service but for those who can inspire us with fear or exploit us or do us damage in other ways! (The institution of some honours meant primarily for men and women distinguished in the “arts of peace” is a recent and unusual post-independence development.) But Nature has a rather cynical sense of humour and our blatant injustices have a knack of recoiling on our own heads, like a boomerang. Having valued the teachers so cheaply we can only get education that is *cheap* in every sense of the word. We have ensured that generally only those people should find their way into the profession on whom all other avenues of employment have been shut and who are not fitted by ability or temperament to make a success of any other work. The economic problem obsesses even the best of them so irresistibly that they have neither the time nor the energy nor the inclination to improve their technical efficiency. It is obviously impossible for the type of school and the type of teacher, that we have been considering, to become a dynamic and life-giving educational centre, capable of attracting the children and the parents. A school can become an effective and popular social agency only when it is an integral part of the pulsating currents of life around it, when it can make both the parents and the children feel that it is adding to their efficiency and deepening their cultural appreciation. So long as it does neither—because Society and

the State have not had the vision, and possibly the resources, to provide the right conditions for all-round development—we have no reason to feel virtuously indignant at the lack of public appreciation for the miserly education provided for it.

Why is it, I ask myself, that Primary Education in this country is so meagre and inadequate, so poor in content, so backward in method, so out-of-date in organization, and entrusted to such poorly-paid and ill-qualified teachers? Why has the State been content to spend about Rs. 8 per child p.a. when the corresponding figure in Great Britain is Rs. 500? The superficial reply always is that this is due to paucity of funds. But the matter really goes deeper and we must ask ourselves why money has not been forthcoming for education when it can, somehow, always be made available for less worthy purposes. I feel that not only our educational, but also our social, structure has been based on certain conscious and unconscious assumptions which are neither just nor true. In the first place, we have been apt to consider that anything is good enough for the education of the masses. While education, as a whole, has received step-motherly treatment in the matter of funds and public attention, Primary Education has been the very Cinderella of the educational family. Leaving aside for the present the fact that it is neither universal nor free nor compulsory, we are confronted with the grim truth that, whatever education is actually provided, is, on the whole, meagre, inadequate, poor in content, backward in methods, out-of-date in organization and entrusted to teachers, who are, as a rule, ill-qualified, untrained and paid scandalously low salaries. Moreover, we seem to have been proceeding on the assumption that intelligence and capacity are not more or less evenly broadcast throughout the social organism but are somehow the monopoly of certain economically privileged classes and that, for the sake of social health and progress, it is sufficient to make arrangements for the education and training of their children. The masses are stamped, as it were, by a brand of inferiority and it is foolish to expect great things of them or to base social policy on that assumption. It is true that, in many countries, driven by

a belated sense of justice or the imperative demands of industry or the unwelcome intrusion of democracy into the neat pattern of the social hierarchy, attempts have been made to provide some sort of rudimentary education for the people also. But, till recently, it was regarded as a kind of charitable provision for which the poorer classes should be humbly and duly grateful. A narrowly conceived curriculum, centring round the three R.s and divorced from life, was considered quite good enough for them and all wider cultural amenities were looked upon as useful frills which could be well dispensed with—arts and crafts, poetry and music, pictures and plays, games and sports, activity and social training. How could these children, brought up on this thin and anaemic mental fare, develop any progressive social ideology or achieve creative self-expression or gain cultural enrichment? The irony of the situation is that, having provided a type of education calculated to produce precisely these depressing results, many people have turned round and triumphantly pointed to them as vindicating their low opinion of the potentialities of the 'common man'! In India, the position has been even worse for, till the Central Advisory Board Report saw the light of the day, Government had not recognized, even in theory, that education is an essential birth-right of every boy and girl, every man and woman living in this country and that India must begin to think in terms of a universal system of National Education.

This is, unfortunately, the assumption on which not only our educational but the entire social system has been built up. The 'good life'—which postulates a generous provision of cultural and material goods for all, and not for the few—has been considered as impossible, if not quite unnecessary, for the mass of the people. The same insensitive and unjust social ideology, which put up complacently with the physical and material deprivations besetting the life of a large majority of the people and was content to let them live in slums—half-starved, ill-clothed and in perpetually poor health—has also been responsible for the poor and insufficient education provided for them. Therefore, the provision of a better education

—and *pari passu* of a better primary education—is bound up with the wider and more fundamental question of providing a better social order in which the fruits of science and industry and man's great technical advance are shared by all and not monopolized by a few. It is impossible, however, to establish social justice without securing *equality of opportunity* for all. When we are intelligent and reasonable enough to do so, we shall be amazed at the wealth of creative talent and capacity which education will release. It is impossible to over-estimate the tremendous waste of human talent which is going on all around us because we have not the will and the good sense to throw our educational net wide enough. Nature provides no corroborative evidence for the assumption that either brains or the gifts of personality are confined to any particular class or group or race. Wherever, in other countries of the world, there has been a movement towards the equality of educational opportunity and enriched educational provision has been made for the people at large, the release of potential creative impulses has exceeded all expectations. In Soviet Russia, for instance, the last two decades have seen a tremendous expansion of the facilities both for technical and cultural education and even the most backward tribes and areas have been brought within the orbit of the new opportunities. This has resulted in such a flowering of the creative human genius—in arts and crafts, in literature, dance and drama, in science and technical skill—as to stagger even the optimists. In Great Britain, too, there has been a marked, though not as spectacular, advance in education and, even before the passage of the Education Act of 1944, progressive Local Education Authorities had realized that they must make a generous provision for the education of the masses. During one of my post-war visits to England I saw, amongst other things, the fine educational buildings, put up for its children by the comparatively poor borough of Margate. One Senior School—which would correspond to our Middle School—had cost the local authority about £50,000! Nothing in reason was considered too good or too extravagant—commodious and well-ventilated rooms with glass covering

two entire sides, pleasant and harmonious colours, well-designed furniture, Workshops and Art Rooms, Library and Reading Room, Dining Room, Gymnasium, Swimming Pool, Bath Rooms and many other facilities which were at one time inconceivable except in Public Schools meant for the richer classes. Such a venture has not only an educative but also a social significance. By training the children of the slums in an environment rich in cultural and artistic stimuli, it becomes possible to re-educate their outlook, their tastes and their interests. There is no reason whatever why, in the case of our people, we should be satisfied with a meagrely conceived education and consider such amenities as unnecessary. I can understand the realistic approach to austerity, i.e. we simply have not the funds for the purpose. But I have not much patience for the type of mind which regards austerity as something particularly appropriate in connection with the education of children.

Let me indicate now, in concrete terms, some of the essential requirements for an adequate system of primary education; if they strike some people as too ambitious the fault is certainly not mine but that of the myopia from which they suffer! In the first place, I postulate for all children free and compulsory education, covering *at least* a period of 7 to 8 years and given in well-planned and well-equipped schools by teachers who are adequately educated and trained and who enjoy social esteem as well as freedom from constant financial worries. The curriculum of these schools should be rich and varied, not narrow and formal centring round the three R.s and cut off from the concrete and pulsating realities of community life. If education is not related dynamically to these realities, it will remain barren and superficial as is the case today. As I have stated elsewhere: While life is practical, pragmatic and constructive, the school is a place of bookish learning. When the child enters the school, there is an abrupt and upsetting split in his life because of the conspicuous lack of continuity between the home and school atmosphere. On account of its predominantly academic approach, the school fails to train its students for the practical demands of an active, social and

productive life. A village boy, who has to find his livelihood and his life interests in agriculture and allied types of manual work, does not become a better farmer or a better citizen by receiving stereotyped instruction in the three R.s. The real object of primary education is not to wean away the children from their rural surroundings or the normal preoccupations of the village community but to enable them to take their place in village life with greater intelligence, understanding and appreciation. The ordinary run of our primary schools fails to achieve this object not only because the curriculum is narrow and one-sided and their methods passive and unliberating but also because they lack adequate accommodation and equipment and work under such adverse material conditions that it becomes impossible to build up any healthy traditions or tastes or truly educative atmosphere in them. Many of the social and artistic aptitudes of children wither away because they never get any chance for self-expression, and the country suffers an incalculable loss of talent and creative capacity.*

In the reconstruction of the educational system, therefore, we must plan the primary schools including rural schools, generously and imaginatively and count no cost too high to secure for the children of the nation an educative environment, rich in cultural and practical stimuli, which would be congenial for the development of their manifold and latent talents, and provide the best social training possible at that stage of their life. Care has to be taken, however, that the school does not wean him away from the normal interests and preoccupations of the rural community. That is one of the reasons why Basic Education, which starts from this premise, should be welcomed as a big step forward in the right direction. I am convinced that, so far as the stage of mass education is concerned, it will generally follow the pattern of Basic Education. In this world of practical realities, where work is the basis of life, a purely bookish education can have little justification and the training of the hand must proceed in close correlation with the training of the mind.

* *The Educational System* (Oxford University Pamphlet).

This fundamental importance of giving education through productive work, which really means education for and through life, should never be forgotten by the educationists. They must be made to realize that, while theoretical knowledge and its repository, the book, are certainly of incalculable value, intelligently directed and purposeful activity is an even more integral part of the play of life. One may sometimes overlook this in the crowded life of a modern city but one cannot easily escape it in the rural areas where the fundamental realities of life stare one more insistently in the face. I am reminded of an occasion when this impression came over me with overwhelming force some years ago in Kashmir. Many visitors to Kashmir must have seen the Wular Lake, overlooking it from the top of a hill at Vatlab where one has a magnificent view of the sky and the clouds and the hills and the vast expanse of the lake all fusing into one riot of colour. Just below this point, there is a small village of fishermen—possibly a hundred in number—living in poor, miserable little huts, apparently cut off from the rest of the world. Their occupation consists in plying their crude little boats in the lake and catching fish for their livelihood. They have little contact with the outside world; a group of visitors passing by their village is an exciting event and a stormy day over the lake, which makes fishing difficult, an economic tragedy. Watching this narrow field of their activities and their desperate struggle to eke out a miserable existence, I asked myself: To what extent does academic knowledge impinge on their life? How far are simultaneous equations or the dynastic quarrels of Indian History or English Grammar relevant to their interests and activities? Will they enjoy life more and become better citizens if they learn a number of subjects at school and thereby acquire a smattering of miscellaneous knowledge? Or, will it be more profitable for them if education were imparted to them through concrete, practical and purposeful activities and knowledge of the social and physical environment were acquired in the course of such fruitful activities? This is not to belittle knowledge which raises man above other animals; it is a question of the right

point of view which can give knowledge its proper place in the economy of life. No educational system dare ignore these basic facts in the formulation of its ideology and technique.

Our primary schools should also concern themselves with the provision of 'social training' for children. Let me indicate what type of training we can impart in them. Obviously, if our conception of the primary school were the poor and narrow conception that I have condemned, the problem will not arise at all. The teachers need not bother about any 'social training' because they would be only concerned with academic instruction. But, even in that case, social training of some kind would necessarily result, because it is implicit in the mere fact of a number of children living and learning together under the supervision of teachers. Such training, however, is chaotic, unplanned, not directed towards any well-defined objectives. If the primary school is to take its proper place in the education of the people—and we must remember that, for a considerable time to come, a large majority of our children will receive *only* primary or basic education—it *must* address itself intelligently and purposefully to the cultivation of certain social and moral qualities in its children. Psychologists have definitely established the fact that the child's first few years determine the basic pattern of his whole life, so much so that later education has often merely to deepen, crystallize and clarify the lines that have been already laid—a discovery which, incidentally, puts the need for nursery and infant schools into an entirely new light. This makes it all the more imperative that social training be made an integral part of the work of the primary school.

Now, the nature of this social training will have to be defined with reference to the nature of the Social Order that we wish to bring into being. I have discussed elsewhere in some detail the features of this Social Order and need not recapitulate them here. It is clear, however, that if this new Social Order is to be at all worth having, it must, at least, have three qualities: it must be *co-operative*; it must *eschew exploitation* of man by man in all its vicious and varied forms;

and it must *cut right across the stratification of society* into classes that are mutually exclusive or hostile. If one agrees with this view, certain educational corollaries would follow naturally and inevitably. Since we wish to develop a *co-operative* outlook, we must plan all aspects of our work—curriculum, methods, organization, discipline, personal influence of teachers—in such a way that the children will cultivate co-operative and social attitudes as easily and smoothly as they develop a competitive and selfish mind at present. You might well ask: Why should curricula, methods, organization, etc. all be dragged into this matter of *social* training? Let me make the point clear. It is impossible to achieve an effective technique for the re-orientation of emotional and intellectual attitudes unless *all* the influences that play upon the child's life are so organized and harmonized that their total pull is focussed in one desirable direction. A socialized orientation of the curriculum will give the pupils an insight into the main factors and forces of the social structure, and, with proper teaching methods, it is amazing how much even young children can understand and appreciate of the significant social phenomena surrounding them. But this naturally calls for the throwing overboard of a good deal of the educational lumber which still encumbers our syllabuses in History, Geography, Mathematics, Sciences and Languages, and the inclusion of enriched and significant subject-matter calculated to give insight into the working of our society. Similarly, social methods of learning, which give children the opportunity to work in groups, to deal with projects and problems, to plan out social and academic purposes in common teach them to value co-operative achievement above individual performance and social service above competitive success. It is *not* a matter of speculation but of actual experience and experiment that children brought up in a well-planned social environment can acquire the qualities of social behaviour just as naturally as they develop now the opposite mentality of selfish individualism. This may perhaps give the impression of simplifying matters too much but I am not at all sure. It is an unfair indictment of human nature to suggest that it is innately

selfish, competitive and exploiting and that it does not respond readily to motives of conduct more honourable than snatch-and-grab and lust for money or power. Such a view is based on an unjustified belittling of the part played by a planned socio-economic environment in the shaping of human conduct and ideology. My contention is that, even during six or eight years of proper schooling, it would be possible to instil co-operative and social attitudes and reactions into the minds and behaviour-patterns of the child.

Again, if our objective is to produce a society where there is free mobility of intercourse, and prejudices, based on economic and social status, have no place, it is necessary to provide a uniform school system where children of *all* the classes will be afforded equality of opportunities for the development of their aptitudes and interests. The existence of slum schools and poverty-stricken rural schools side by side with luxuriously appointed private schools, charging high fees and closing their doors to all talent unwedded to wealth, has no educational justification. It is socially disastrous, because it tends to accentuate and perpetuate existing social differences. I have sometimes toyed with the idea that, purely as a matter of tactics, it might be a good thing to close, temporarily at least, all Public Schools, Convents, Chiefs' Colleges and expensive Primary and Secondary Schools, and force the children of wealthier parents to attend the ordinary Primary (and Secondary) Schools which are considered good enough for the rest of the children! There would, I think, be such a protest and reaction against the conditions, material and human, existing in the ordinary primary schools that the possibility of improving them may come appreciably nearer! If democracy is really something worthwhile, it means that the State and society should give, so far as possible, the same *chances for development* to the sons of the poor labourer and peasant as to those of the capitalist and the prince. This does not, of course, mean that all children will be taught in *identical* schools but that admission and diversion to different types of schools will be made on the basis of their psychological aptitudes rather than social and financial status. Having

brought them within the purview of an all-inclusive national system of primary education, there are at least two things which we must do in order to produce the social mentality that we value. Firstly, in our schools, practical, creative and constructive activities of different kinds should find an honoured place, and all children, irrespective of their class affiliations, should participate in them, so that they may learn the dignity of manual work through which all primary needs of mankind are met, and which the educated classes have been complacently disposed to regard as beneath their dignity. The educational and psychological justification for the introduction of such activities and occupations need not be discussed here; it is too well known now to require elucidation. But its social justification is, at least, as important. It should be impossible for any child to pass through our national system of education without having soiled his hands with work—not just art and craft work but actual physical and manual labour also—which, amongst other things, offers greater scope for cooperative endeavour and for cultivating a sense of human kinship than ordinary book work in schools. We must also try to break down, through our schools, the existing remoteness between urban and rural areas and give to children in each type of school opportunities to gain experiences characteristic of the other. No education can be complete which does not bring the city child into contact with the natural and social phenomena of rural life—its plants and animals, its men and women, their occupations and problems, and their contact with Nature which both defines and sustains their work. Similarly, the village child should have opportunities to undertake excursions to the neighbouring towns and cities and observe for himself how people live and work and how there is an invisible but permanent bond between the village and the city which maintains life in both. I would in this connection commend to your notice the valuable experiments tried out in some parts of England with the object of establishing a genuine contact between children of cities and villages. During the last war, harassed and overworked teachers, preoccupied with the problem of evacuation, which

required the transfer of lakhs of children from the danger zones in the cities to the rural areas, discovered, often to their own amazement, that measures adopted to meet a cruel emergency were turning out to be a source of physical health and vitality, mental alertness and a new sense of social comradeship in these children! Many enterprising teachers in England now arrange regular exchanges of students for short periods between village and city schools, not just for the conventional purpose of sight-seeing but for the carrying out of "social surveys" and establishing abiding social contacts. In our own country which is, and must long remain, a predominantly agricultural country, such contacts between the city and the village should prove a great blessing both socially and educationally and they must form an integral part of the scheme for social training. The introduction of Labour and Social Service Camps on a large scale, the starting of the Village Apprenticeship Scheme in some Universities etc. are part of the response to this need. At the same time, it must be recognised that any education or social organization, which impoverishes the countryside by turning its best or most promising brains to quill-driving in an office or screw-turning in a factory, instead of leading a full and contented life in agricultural work, is a social crime. Education should be so re-oriented that a large majority of educated children *will* stay on in the villages and devote their talents to the service of their fellow villagers and labour to increase their standards of culture and efficiency. We have been far too apt not only to neglect the villages but also to ignore the educative resources of rural life. There are many distinct and valuable educative stimuli in the rural environment which do not come the way of the urban child, in spite of the much greater concentration of cultural and technical resources in the cities. Our policy, on the educational side, should be to relate primary education more closely to the activities and occupations of village life and, on the social side, to extend to the villages the fruits of technical advances as well as the cultural amenities confined at present to the bigger cities. This has to be done whether we believe in industrialization or the cottage-

craft economy; for, without it, we can vitalize neither rural education nor rural life.

In a poor and backward country like India, it would not be sufficient to provide good schools, well-paid teachers and a reasonable curriculum, because most of the children will not be able to avail themselves fully of these facilities. The State will have to go further and make itself responsible for financial assistance in a variety of ways. A majority of parents cannot afford to buy books or stationery; they cannot clothe or provide footwear for their children; they cannot give them a decent midday meal or look after their eyesight or general health. No civilized Government can remain content with herding in schools masses of under-fed, ill-nourished children, dressed in rags, shivering in the cold and suffering from all kinds of diseases and physical defects. Under such circumstances, no child can derive full benefit from the educational facilities open to him. It is, therefore, incumbent on the State—and *not* a matter of optional charity—to organize an adequate school health service, to make provision for midday meals, to offer liberal stipends to the needy children so that they may buy books and other personal requirements and to arrange holiday camps and other aids to physical development. In extreme cases, where an only child's continued education will deprive aged or infirm parents of their solitary source of income, maintenance allowances will be necessary. I should not be surprised if all these claims on behalf of the neglected Indian child are dismissed as utopian by those whose social conscience and imagination have become insensitive to the tragedy of the existing situation and to whom every great measure of social reform is unacceptable because of its financial implications. Such things, they will say, are all right in a rich country like England or the United States of America but how can a poor country like India afford these luxuries? My answer to that argument is twofold. Firstly, they are not luxuries but necessities. If people enjoying a much higher standard of living need all this assistance in their children's education, how much more urgent is the need of Indian parents, many of whom live on the verge of starvation."

Secondly, the question is not whether we can afford to do all these things but *whether we can afford not to do them!* How can we have the slightest hope of either improving our economic and cultural standards or increasing our practical efficiency or training our people in intelligent citizenship without even providing a broad-based and generously planned system of Primary Education? There can be no more profitable investment than spending money on giving a better chance in life to the growing generation and there is no worse economy than to perpetuate ignorance, poverty, disease and inefficiency by retrenching on the social services. In recent years, these issues have at least come to the forefront and Education Departments are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for providing these amenities for children. It is now not so much the lack of appreciation as of resources that stands in the way of the contemplated reorganization.

Chapter VIII

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN A VILLAGE*

LET us start with a platitude; for, a platitude often contains a kernel of truth and, if it is not *treated* platitudinously, it may be quite useful. India is primarily a land of villages—there were as many as 7,00,000 villages in pre-partition India—and if we want to do anything for the good of the country as a whole, our proper point of departure and constant centre of reference will have to be the village. Till the early decades of this century, most educational and social movements centred round the cities and the urban population, and, so far as Government and even the public workers were concerned, the villages existed, as it were, only at the periphery of their consciousness and not much was done about them. That was so, partly because they did not quite realize how important the village was in the Indian pattern of life, and partly because they thought that the problem was of such vast magnitude that nothing could be done about it. The ingenuity of man can find quite plausible excuses for not doing things which are difficult and unpleasant! There were many exceptions—small groups and individuals who devoted themselves sincerely to the service of the village—and there were occasional spurts of activity on the part of the Government to start some rural reconstruction work. But these were small, flickering points of light in a dark horizon. It would be true to say that, till Gandhiji appeared on the horizon and practically reversed all our social, political and economic values and concepts, the village had not come into its own. It did not certainly occupy the focus of our politicians' attention. It was he who taught Indian leaders, through precept and example, the basic truth that they must turn to the villages and start the process of reconstruction at that end if they really wished to bring about

* Broadcast from All India Radio, Bombay.

any radical change in the Indian situation. It was under his inspiration that thousands of volunteers buried themselves in the depths of the countryside, doing patient work, which rarely caught the limelight but which gradually brought about political awakening and eventually resulted in the winning of freedom.

It is not my purpose here to give the story of this silent, many-sided revolution that has taken place in the villages—a revolution that is no doubt far from being complete but does mark a definitely new chapter in the history of the nation. My object is to indicate briefly what part can be played by education in this process of building up better, happier and more prosperous villages.

While it is true that sporadic efforts had been going on for improving primary education for several decades, decisive leadership in this field also came from Gandhiji when he launched his scheme of Basic Education in 1937. The experience of a life-time had convinced him that no far-reaching social or economic or political changes could be brought about unless there was a radical change in the educational system—a change that will touch not merely the methods and curricula but the very objectives and ideology of education. So he placed before the country and its educationists his scheme of primary education, the basic idea of which was that it should centre not round books but round rural crafts closely related to the life and activities of the village. The existing system, which confines itself largely to a passive teaching of the three R.s, is not only itself isolated from life but also divorced the school children from dynamic and meaningful *activities*. How could a school in the countryside capture the loyalty or imagination of the villagers if it made their children strangers to the life of the village? And, how could such children contribute anything worthwhile and creative to it? Their tendency would naturally be to cut themselves adrift from the village and try and find some opening in the neighbouring towns or cities. Thus, the more ambitious and talented youngsters were gradually drawn away from the villages and this impoverished their future. The business of rural education,

therefore, is to adopt an ideology and technique which will give village children the desire to stay in the village and train them to serve, enrich and improve village life. This alone can make education real and enlist children's interest—interest which is alienated today by a bookish curriculum and unpsychological methods of approach.

To understand adequately the role of education in the reconstruction of our villages, we have to ask ourselves: What are the main problems of the village which education should prepare the children to tackle intelligently and purposefully? In the first place, a village is a community where all people work—or, at least under socially healthy conditions, all *should* work. And this work is not with files or books but mainly with men and things and Nature—it is practical, productive and manual work like ploughing the land and growing the crops, tending the cattle, making bricks, weaving cloth, constructing huts and rendering various forms of practical service to one another which keeps community life going. Now, if a child is to fit into this picture, he should be able to take on willingly and competently any job of practical work that may come his way. This means that his school education should centre round crafts and practical work which, as I have discussed elsewhere, is the approach adopted by Basic Education. Again, the village has many problems of sanitation and water-supply, health and hygiene, enforced leisure and wasteful methods of work which can only be solved if the villagers possess adequate and correct knowledge about them and are trained to apply that knowledge to their life situations. This implies the framing of a syllabus—particularly in Social Studies and General Science—which is closely related to real problems of rural life, and which is so presented that the conventional walls between school knowledge and life-situations disappear. In addition, it would require the establishment of rural institutions at a higher level which will train young men and women to tackle these technical and social problems of village reconstruction competently. The scheme of Rural Institutes which has been initiated recently by the Central Government is partly an answer to this need. Thirdly,

there are many kinds of prejudices, superstitions and unhealthy and uncivic social practices which retard clear thinking—and, therefore, right living—in our villages. The school should be able to make not only children but their parents realize the stupidity and the dangers of such ideas and practices, and wage war against obscurantism and wrong traditions.

Now, all this work requires that there should be, on the part of all school children, a desire for *social service* so that they will not only learn the good things and the proper ways of life themselves but be anxious to share them with the community. The school has thus to be set in a living and dynamic social context where children are not only trained for doing social work in some distant future but have real opportunities *here and now* for rendering different kinds of social service which are within their reach and capacity. And, pray, do not run away with the idea that children can do little! Where the spirit is willing and teachers have some imagination and common sense they can do a great deal. I had a survey made some years ago of the social work being done on a voluntary basis in the schools of the State of Bombay* and I was agreeably surprised to find how children of primary and secondary schools were responding to the call of the newer ideals of education and meeting the challenge of the situation—growing more food, cleaning up their villages, running social education centres, organizing entertainments for the local community, visiting hospitals and carrying on various other useful social activities. To be sure, not all schools are doing so—in fact, it is only a small fraction of the total number—but they are a good augury for the future and they point to what can be done by other schools if they have the necessary will and knowledge. And we can never start too early—the seeds which are to sprout into efficient social service can be sown in the minds of children even at the pre-primary stage. In our Basic Schools, we encourage even the youngest children to work in groups, to undertake

* Published by the office of the Educational Adviser to Bombay Government under the title *Social Service in Schools*.

small duties and responsibilities, to clean their own rooms and to look after the school so far as they can do so. A little later, they are encouraged to work outside the school also and join with the villagers in their activities and occupations and to organize *safai* and health programmes. If the same spirit is carried forward to post-basic or secondary education and inspires our college students and teachers, we can bring about a great, if silent, revolution in the countryside. These older students could utilize their holidays and vacations to work in the villages and they can bring their technical knowledge and cultural gifts to the service of the countryside. Actually, the movement of Labour and Social Service Camps and campus work projects by students, which was started during the five Five Year Plan and is being continued, has aroused considerable interest and enthusiasm both in schools and colleges. But the bulk of this work should and will have to be done by the thousands of humble primary and secondary schools in the villages because a community can create a better future for itself only through the initiative and self-help of its own members. If the educated city youths go into the villages, it would be good for the salvation of their own souls—they will be repaying some of the debt which the city owes to the village and perhaps learn many useful things. But a regeneration of the countryside can only come if *its* children are trained to become self-reliant and socially conscious individuals determined to root out all that stands in the way of their building a better life for themselves. And this is obviously the task of a reorganized and vitalized system of education which has its roots deep in the soil of the village but is inspired by ideals which are not ashamed, if I may say so, to look the stars in the face!

In the valuable Report of the Indian Universities Commission, there is a very valuable chapter dealing with Rural Universities and, as a preamble to the main discussion, it makes an appraisal of the possibilities of Basic and Post-Basic Education in their relation to the village situation. I shall quote here an extract from it, because it supports authoritatively the view of rural education that I have presented:

"At this fateful moment in our history, we have the extreme good fortune to have had presented to us a pattern and philosophy of education of such universal and fundamental worth that it may well serve as the type for bringing into being the new India which is the desire of many of us. Taking Gandhiji's concept as a whole, it presents the seeds of a method for the fulfilment and refinement of human personality, the wisdom and excellence of which will become more apparent through the years, and will stand the test of time and of criticism. Inherently the concept is one of the world's great contributions to education.

"The method outlined in its rudiments by Gandhiji is not just a way of meeting the educational needs of little children. He has stated the essential elements of a universal method of education, from the time a little child shares in its mother's work, through the whole process of growth of personality to the time when the mature man of disciplined mind and character works at the side of the master in the achievement of a great design."

It is only when the 'great new design' of education has been successfully achieved that we can bring the better villages of our dreams into being.

Chapter IX

THE CONTRIBUTION OF BASIC EDUCATION

MAHATMA GANDHI had an amazingly versatile genius which expressed itself in many different fields and left its stamp on almost every aspect of our national life and activity—political, social, moral and economic. Who would have thought, however, that this great politician and social reformer—who spent so many years of his life in jail and the rest in the active and busy struggle for the freedom of his country—would not only find the time and the energy but also reveal the insight and the vision to make a permanent and far-reaching contribution in the field of *education*? Not that it is an unusual thing for laymen to dabble in education! Journalists, platform speakers, politicians and lawyers, all consider education fair game and are prepared complacently to instruct the educationists in their business. But most of them either talk platitudes or make impracticable suggestions or simply do not know what they are talking about. Mahatma Gandhi's incursion into this field was, however, a welcome and significant event. His insight into the educational problem of the country was the result neither of book study nor of ordinary teaching experience; it was the fruit of his first-hand knowledge of men and matters and his understanding of the realities of the Indian social situation. The significance of his educational contribution is twofold. On the one hand, it is the special response of the Indian genius to the Indian educational situation—a spontaneous outgrowth from the soil and not an import, or imposition, from without like the existing system. On the other hand, it has also certain elements of universal validity which bring it into line with the progressive educational thought of the age—a fact which, I believe, came as a surprise to Gandhiji himself who had no contact with modern educational movements in foreign countries!

It is a matter of historic significance that the earliest stages of the trial and development of this scheme coincided with the years of the fateful world war which ended in 1945. The casual observer at the time may well have wondered why, when the rest of the world was headed towards this great disaster of human history, we in this country should have concerned ourselves, under Gandhiji's leadership, with such small and apparently trivial matters as the education of young children in primary schools. This attitude is intelligible; for, to small minds, cultural forces have always appeared trivial and negligible in comparison with the forces of destruction. It reveals, however, a lamentable perversion of values, a failure to appreciate the truth that it is the creative and constructive forces of culture which ultimately shape human destiny and that what we regard as the great and catastrophic events of history are a result not exclusively of political and economic but also of psychological forces which have been set in motion in the minds of individuals and groups. Our concern with a better system and a new ideology of education, based on justice, co-operative endeavour, productive work and respect for human individuality, is rooted in the belief that, through such education, we might direct the intellectual and emotional disposition of the growing generation into right channels and thereby help to constitute mental guarantees in favour of peace and justice. Possibly, we anticipated—at least Gandhiji did—the famous Unesco slogan: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be created." It will perhaps be said to the credit of this country that, even when it was faced with the greatest crisis in the national and international fields, it did not fail to show due appreciation of the creative forces which weave the texture of a nation's intellectual and spiritual life.

Gandhiji had a special technique of work wherever he initiated any new social or political or cultural movement. He put his ideas—deliberately, I think—in such a drastic form that people were startled out of their indifference and their smugness. He was able in this way to provoke a lively, even

a furious, discussion and to challenge established routine more successfully than a more cautious and 'reasonable' approach would have done. This was what he did when he wrote a series of articles on education in the *Harijan* in 1937. They provoked great controversy and opposition from many different quarters but they also made people ponder over the fundamentals of the educational situation, not as seen 'through a glass darkly' in limited pedagogical terms but as posed by a clear-sighted layman in a series of clear-cut propositions. Now that the violence of the first unpremeditated reactions has abated and the scheme has been given a reasonable trial for about two decades in many parts of the country, it would be worthwhile to examine these propositions and their criticism dispassionately.

What did Gandhiji postulate? The outline of his scheme is very well known to all teachers and educationists. First, mass education should be made free, universal and compulsory. There is nothing new in this demand—except its pointed urgency—and it is an objective which most civilized countries have already achieved and which has since been endorsed by educational opinion in this country also. Secondly, this mass education should not be perfunctory, cut short at the end of four (or five) years when the children have barely achieved literacy and their chances of acquiring any useful knowledge or social training are negligible. The minimum duration of this 'Basic National Education'—as it came to be known later—should be seven years, covering the period of 7 to 14 years. Again, all are agreed on its desirability but many regard it as not 'feasible' for the present. Would it be right to look upon it as a too high-pitched aim when other civilized countries have found this period too *short* for imparting effective primary education? Thirdly, this education should be given through the mother-tongue. It is only in a country like India that it was necessary to insist on such an elementary right! Fourthly—and this is the crucial *educational* basis of the scheme—this mass education should be given through productive crafts like spinning and weaving and agriculture and not primarily through books, that children should actually

produce articles that are marketable and these should be sold to make education self-supporting, so far as possible. He had also suggested that the State should not devote its resources to Secondary and Higher Education—which should either be left to private enterprise or provided by different professions and industries like Law, Medicine and Engineering—but should primarily concentrate on the education of the masses.

It is interesting to recall the first reactions of various schools of thought in the country to these educational 'heresies'. It was inevitably a mixed reception. First, there were people who had differed from Gandhiji fundamentally on all socio-economic questions. Some of them were out for full-scale industrialization and regarded small-scale handicrafts as part of the medieval economy which should be scrapped altogether. They considered the scheme not only impracticable but also reactionary, calculated to arrest the country's industrial development by keeping it at the cottage-craft level. They overlooked the somewhat obvious point that—even from their point of view—an education, given through work, is more likely to produce skilled and competent industrial workers than a predominantly bookish education and that crafts are nearer to industries than mere theoretical learning. Then, there were the 'orthodox' educationists who were dismayed at the idea of craft work challenging the age-long supremacy of the textbook and at small children 'wasting' their time at school in 'manual labour'. Their apprehension was that such a scheme of education would not produce great intellectuals like Iqbal or Radhakrishnan or Tagore—or their own infinitely precious selves! They failed to realize that genius is not made to order, that different types of human beings find their self-expression and self-fulfilment in infinitely different ways and that the book is not the only avenue of culture—in fact, by itself, i.e. divorced from life and work, not an avenue to culture at all! Again, there were Gandhiji's devout disciples to whom every word of the Mahatma was like scripture and they were naturally inclined to accept everything he said *in toto*. These did not, in the first flush of their enthusiasm, realize that Gandhiji's proper function was *not* to present a

complete educational picture but only to suggest certain broad and fruitful ideas, to be scrutinized, modified and implemented by educationists in due course.

But Gandhiji was greater and more open-minded than both his doctrinaire admirers and his professional critics. He did not regard his ideas as gospel truth but as starting points for further inquiry. So he entrusted his outline scheme for proper formulation and scrutiny first to a Conference of educationists and then to a Committee, for which he happily selected Dr. Zakir Husain as the Chairman, even though at the Wardha Conference his appreciation of the scheme had been tempered by intelligent and constructive criticism. No other person could possibly have mined educational gold out of that rich ore more successfully. He belongs to that small and select group of educationists who have been trying, in their respective spheres of work, to bring about a radical transformation of the educational system and have always registered an emphatic protest against its over-academic and bookish traditions. They saw great possibilities in the new scheme, and its central idea, at which Gandhiji had arrived intuitively, appealed to them powerfully, because it was also in harmony with the best trends of progressive educational thought. What was this idea? That work, done with integrity and intelligence, is ultimately the only proper medium through which human beings can be rightly educated and that schools must become active centres of *doing* and *learning by doing*, both organized in integral relationship with each other. This appreciation of the intrinsic relationship between doing, learning, and living is no accidental 'off-shoot', which his philosophy of life has put forth; it springs from the deepest sources of his thought. To him, as to the priest in Shaw's 'John Bull's Other Island', 'Life is work and work is worship—Three in One and One in Three'. He had been a worker—and in contact with workers—throughout his life and knew, through firsthand experience and observation, that all real value is created through honest work and that true Culture is even more emphatically a product of the field, the farm and the workshop than of the Library and the Lecture room. He deplored the isolation of

the educated classes from the dynamic of national life and suggested, as a remedy, that, during the formative years, youths should be given opportunities of doing real productive work at school where they should learn to grapple with obstinate raw materials like cotton and wool and wood and the earth as the home of agriculture. In the course of this real, purposeful work, they will not only produce marketable articles but will also acquire much necessary practical knowledge, and turn to books, under the spur of a felt need, as sources of further useful knowledge. Thus books will become *not* substitutes for, but aids to, activity and the knowledge gained will be integrated into character and personality. Such knowledge—even if limited in range—was to Gandhiji's way of thinking more valuable and effective than the much wider knowledge which is mechanically borrowed from books and remains a passive possession of the learner.

One must acknowledge the validity of this principle of education through productive work unless one is prepared to ignore the irresistible evidence of psychology, common sense and intelligent observation alike, or to look upon the values of whole-hearted creative and purposive activity, which brings joy and a sense of fulfilment in its train, as irrelevant to the process of education. Those who have observed how such work, rightly organized, transforms, as if by magic, the entire atmosphere of the school and quickens the students' interest in life and in their studies are bound to appreciate the significance of the new emphasis placed on craft work in education. Teachers of Training Colleges in India and writers of books on education had been advocating this view for years but their theories had received merely academic recognition without exercising any far-reaching influence on school practice. It is to the credit of the scheme of Basic Education that it has made this urgently needed reform an immediate and concrete issue. I realize that it is possible to differ about the *degree* of emphasis to be placed on this aspect of the scheme, about the exact amount of time to be devoted to it and its economic implications, but differences of detail, which only intelligent experience can resolve, should not cloud for

us the soundness of its fundamental basis.

It would be wrong, however, to presume that Gandhiji was primarily interested in the children acquiring craft skill and comparatively unconcerned about the wider objectives of education. In his Introductory remarks to the Report on Basic National Education, he made this observation:

“Education through village handicrafts means that teachers are expected to educate children in their villages, so as to *draw out all their faculties* through some selected village handicrafts in an atmosphere free of super-imposed restrictions and interference.”

Would not this insistence on *education through productive work and education in an atmosphere of freedom* delight the heart of any ‘new educationist’?

It may be useful at this stage to point out that what Gandhiji has advocated is *not*, in its essence, an entirely new educational doctrine as, curiously, both his staunch disciples and his bitter critics believed! Gifted teachers in all ages have consciously or unconsciously known and acted on this principle of education through activity. During this century through educational movements like the Project Method and the Activity School, this doctrine has been given a place of honour in schools of Europe and America and Soviet Russia. The special significance of Gandhiji’s contribution lies, firstly, in the fact that it is *he* who has made it and, secondly, in that no one in India had stressed the principle so emphatically and unambiguously before, or sought to make it *basic* to the entire educational process. The ‘academic’ tradition in education has persisted here for centuries with the result that culture has become divorced from work, and manual labour is still regarded by many as positively dishonourable. Gandhiji struck at the citadel of this prejudice and stipulated that every child, whether rich or poor, ‘high-born’ or ‘low-born’, should wholeheartedly participate in actual manual work. The justification for this step is as much social as psychological; for, the education of the *worker* is in a very real sense, ‘the door to the

education of the *man*'. Productive work thus becomes not only a dominant fact of the curriculum: its spirit begins to inspire the methods of teaching and discipline as well as the whole atmosphere of the school.

Reference may be made at this stage to what is the most controversial feature of the scheme—namely, that this education through work should be made self-supporting so far as recurring expenditure is concerned. At the Conference, the idea was modified to the extent that it should 'gradually be able to cover the remuneration of Basic school teachers calculated at the rate of Rs. 25 p.m.' Now, why did Gandhiji place so much insistence on this feature of the scheme? This was, I think, partly due to his serious apprehension that, unless some emergency measures are taken, it will not be possible for India, a poor country, to make provision for Basic Education on a mass scale. That the apprehension is not ill-founded is shown by the financial implications of Basic Education, as worked out in the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education. They are frankly prohibitive for the present, unless, through a policy of vigorous industrialization, the wealth of the country is multiplied several-fold. As Gandhiji did not favour large-scale industrialization and was not prepared to postpone the scheme to some distant future date, there was no alternative to him but to make such a proposal. But that is not the whole story—there is also another more valid, *psychological* reason for this idea. If craft work is to be anything more than a mere hobby or pastime, it must inculcate thoroughness, efficiency, the economic use of time and resources and the other habits and qualities associated with true craftsmanship. To ensure this, a measurable check has to be imposed on the products of children's craft activity and, obviously, a rough-and-ready test on a large scale is their marketability. The Zakir Husain Committee has particularly stressed this consideration, quite apart from the financial aspect of the proposal. Unless we insist on the articles produced being of a sufficiently good quality to be saleable—after the children have had a few years of training, of course—there would be no safeguard against half-hearted and slip-

shod work. It has been argued that this proposal will turn schools into factories and revive child labour in an invidious form. This apprehension reveals a failure to appreciate the basic difference in spirit, approach and atmosphere between a good school and a bad factory. The real objection to child labour rests on the *exploitation* of the child by the State or the parents or the capitalist, on the inhuman and insanitary conditions under which children are condemned to work in factories, and in the divorce between purpose and activity, which characterizes their work. The child is *not* averse to work as such—in fact, his active spirit is always craving for it and protesting against purposeless book learning. If the working conditions in 'Activity schools' are healthy and mentally stimulating, if the children's native interests are properly enlisted, if—in the words of Gandhiji—the 'why and wherefore' of the processes, in which they are engaged, are fully discussed and brought out, manual and skilled work becomes a powerful medium for 'general' or 'liberal' education.

There is, of course, the danger that short-sighted teachers may fail to strike the right balance between the practical and cultural objectives of their work, but can there ever be a fool-proof educational scheme, which unintelligent teachers cannot defeat? Do they not interpret the present aims of education and practise the present methods just as unintelligently! If, however, the inner meaning of the scheme is rightly understood, there is nothing in it which is repugnant to the healthy all-round development of children. I say so not on *a priori* grounds; I have seen a large number of Basic Schools at work and the evidence they provide cannot be ignored. I had the opportunity, some years back, to organize the scheme of Basic Education in the Jammu and Kashmir State. From one point of view, this State had an advantage over the rest of India in that its people, particularly the Kashmiris, have a remarkable tradition and capacity for artistic crafts and their beautiful creations have won the envy and admiration of all outsiders. To them, therefore, the introduction of the craft in the elementary education does not appear to be an unintelligible innovation. The response of the teachers, whom we

trained for the new schools, was remarkably encouraging and it greatly strengthened my faith in the soundness of the underlying principles of the scheme. I watched this development for about seven years and, during this period, visited a large number of Basic Schools and kept brief notes of my observations. Let me take you into one of these Basic Schools—this is one of the *good* Basic Schools—and share with you some of my observations of its activities. Here is a group of young and bright children gathered round the teacher in one corner of the garden studying the unfinished cardboard model of a house, which they are constructing with the help of the teacher. A brisk conversation is going on—in which boys are eager and impatient to participate—regarding the construction of the house, the need for doors and windows, the shape of the roof and its relation to climatic conditions, the difference between this model and the kind of houses in which people round about them generally live and the bad effects of the latter on their health. A child suggests that the house should be occupied by a family and, in due course, the group splits itself into smaller groups, cutting out crude cardboard figures of mother, father, brothers and sisters, etc. The discussion then turns to the part played by the mother, the father and the children in the family, their respective duties and responsibilities, their occupations and leisure pursuits, i.e. what, at a later stage, would be described as problems in civics and social studies. . . . A second group has already constructed, in another corner of the garden, a model showing the Banihal Pass, the Kashmir Road, the snow-clad mountains, the Jhelum river winding its way through *shali* fields—a little lime on hill tops doing service for snow, and water poured out of a bucket showing the melting of the snow and the flow of the river! This is their nucleus for learning the ‘geography’ of Kashmir and many other interesting things besides. . . . Two boys are in charge of the Cooperative School Shop and School Bank, the ‘building’ of which—a rough wooden shed—has been *actually* constructed by older boys. These boys—who take fortnightly turns at this work—keep regular accounts of all transactions and they will tell you with pride that they

had made a profit of over 100 per cent on their original investment—without ‘exploiting’ their customers! In this way, their ‘book-keeping’ becomes a project with a natural motivation and in a natural setting. You will find other groups engaged in spinning and weaving or working out a project for a cleaner and better laid-out village—as an introduction to practical citizenship—or conducting a dispensary—where the young ‘doctor’ solemnly attends to his duties and keeps a register of his ‘patients’,—or editing the school journal or working on their special hobbies. One of the most interesting groups would be that of tiny youngsters engaged in ‘expressional drawing’ of which a continuous record is maintained year after year, throwing interesting light on their psychological reactions and development. The whole school is astir with the hum of activity, and the boys engage in their work with a serene self-possession and a healthy unconcern about the crowd of visitors, who, formerly, made them uncomfortably self-conscious!

This, mind you, is the silhouette of a *good* school. Basic Schools too, like other schools—like, in fact, everything else in the world!—are good, bad and indifferent. In the final analysis, it is the teacher’s personality, his intelligence and integrity that determine the real quality of school teaching, its discipline and its social and moral atmosphere. But, experience has shown that, compared to the non-Basic schools as a whole, boys in the Basic schools are more alert and active, more social minded and more responsible.

At the instance of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, I had a quinquennial survey of Basic Education conducted in the State and, on the basis of reports received from over a hundred Basic School teachers and their supervisors, we came to certain conclusions from which the following extracts may be of some interest to readers:

“ . . . Children, who have been educated according to this scheme, have shown far greater mental alertness and educational awareness than pupils of ordinary schools. In powers of self-expression and in arithmetic, these students have, generally speaking, proved superior to those in ordi-

nary schools. Craft work, which is not interpreted narrowly as mere manual activity, has succeeded in stimulating and sustaining their interest to a degree which could not be possible in an atmosphere of purely bookish education.

"... Their emotional response to their environment is, on the whole, richer and fuller than before. They take a keener delight in flowers and pet animals, and are more inquisitive and more eager to know the why, how and wherefore of things and persons surrounding them. They love group games and project activities, and take a keen interest in decorating their classrooms and making collections for their school museum. Many of the basic schools have planned small gardens of their own at their own initiative.

"The cleanliness of the classroom is mainly the children's concern, and, on week-ends, they busy themselves in removing articles of furniture from the classrooms and scrubbing the floors and the walls of the rooms. They have learnt to take pride in handling the broom and the basket and participate, willingly, in manual work on village uplift days, a fact which has been highly appreciated by the public."

There is, however, one note of warning which needs to be sounded against the tendency which is noticeable in some quarters to regard the scheme as completed and sacrosanct. I had done so, as far back as 1939, when I had the opportunity to preside over the First Basic National Conference held at Poona and I might quote what I had then said to the delegates:

"In the case of a new scheme like this, where all soil is virgin soil and constant, vigilant experimentation is needed to ensure success, the importance of free and frank discussion cannot be exaggerated. We have to benefit from what our colleagues in other parts of the country have done; we have to place our own experience into the common pool. We have particularly to safeguard against the ever-present danger of letting the scheme petrify into an orthodoxy which

may not be criticized or modified in any particular. While clear and convinced about our objectives and basic fundamentals, we have to keep our minds open to suggestions and criticisms both from inside and outside, for no loyalty and no allegiance can be greater than the loyalty and allegiance that we owe to truth and the spirit of inquiry which is its handmaiden. We must relentlessly examine the methods, the syllabus, the standards and the actual educational and economic implications of the scheme and, where intelligent experience demands any modifications, we should be willingly prepared to make them. I hope and trust that the Conference will set about its task of assessment in this spirit of broad and open-minded inquiry."

The scheme does not, however, concentrate exclusively on a revision of the curriculum and methods, important as they are; it is equally concerned with the far more important problem of the ideology which should inspire educational effort in India. It envisages a society in which every individual would be a productive member and would be proud of the characteristic contribution which he or she can make to the social good through cooperative endeavour; it envisages a concept of culture which would reject the traditional dualism between learning and doing, between knowledge and action. It seeks to bridge the gulf which the present system of education has created between the educated and the uneducated classes, making the former's culture superficial, anaemic, cut off from its natural roots in the soil, and leaving the latter in ignorance and bondage to superstition. It aims at exalting cooperation above competition, the ideal of service above desire for selfish exploitation, the attitude of non-violence above that of violence. It values 'creative' happiness—which comes through useful work willingly undertaken and successfully performed—above 'possessive' happiness which is the result of an individual trying to annex as many external possessions as possible.* Above all, it is inspired by the hope

* I have discussed these two concepts of "Happiness" in Chapters V and VI.

that, by making all children learn cooperatively through craft work and thus sharing the life and labour of the masses of mankind, it will not only release some of their most fruitful powers for the service of the common good but also deepen their sense of humanity, of kinship with their fellow-men all over the world. I might sum up its ideal in the words of the Report of the Zakir Husain Committee in this behalf, which will bear repetition:

“We are anxious that teachers and educationists who undertake this new educational venture should clearly realize the ideal of citizenship inherent in it. In modern India, citizenship is destined to become increasingly democratic in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the country. The new generation must at least have an opportunity of understanding its own problems and rights and obligations. A completely new system is necessary to secure the minimum of education for the intelligent exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship. Secondly, in modern times, the intelligent citizen must be an active member of society, able to repay in the form of some useful service what he owes to it as a member of an organized and civilized community. An education which produces drags and parasites—whether rich or poor—stands condemned. It not only impairs the productive capacity and efficiency of the society but also engenders a dangerous and immoral mentality. This scheme is designed to produce *workers*, who will look upon all kinds of useful work—including manual labour, even scavenging—as honourable, and who will be both able and willing to stand on their own feet.

“Such a close relationship of the work done at school to the work of the community will also enable the children to carry the outlook and attitudes acquired in the school environment into the wider world outside. Thus the new scheme which we are advocating will aim at giving the citizens of the future a keen sense of personal worth, dignity and efficiency, and will strengthen in them the desire for self-improvement and social service.

"In fine, the scheme envisages the ideal of cooperative community, in which the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children during the plastic years of childhood and youth. Even during the period of school education, they will feel that they are directly and personally cooperating in the great experiment of national education."

Chapter X

VITALIZING SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH WORK

THERE are two ways of approach to most educational problems—a formal, stereotyped and timid approach which follows a prescribed pattern and a bold and an imaginative approach which is not afraid of blazing out a new trail. There can be no real progress unless some educational workers and educational institutions have the vision to adopt the latter approach. I am prepared to agree that *all* schools are neither able, nor equipped with the necessary material and human resources, to adopt the latter method. But, unless there is a leavening of the mass by a few schools which are prepared to do so, we cannot expect any forward educational movement.

These reflections were suggested to me by a book that I have been reading recently—the life of a Russian teacher, Makarenko, written by an Englishman, W. L. Goodman, and published by Routledge & Kegan Paul. Makarenko's work did not lie in the traditional schools with normal children but was concerned with winning back to normal citizenship and useful work, children who had become delinquent and were living the life of young bandits and vagabonds, because there was no one to look after them in the early years of the Russian Revolution which were beset with famine, chaos and the breakdown of the existing social order. He founded a new type of settlement for them—the most famous of which was the "Gorky Colony"—based on self-government, practical work and the challenge of a realistic situation. He firmly believed that "initiative only arises when there is a problem set, when some one is responsible for its solution, when there are demands upon the community". And he provided an environment which did make an imperative demand on the initiative of these misguided youths. The following quotation

from the blurb of the book provides a good introduction to his work:

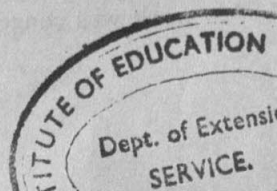
"In the chaos of the early years of the Russian Revolution gangs of homeless children lived lives of bandits and outlaws in the cities and country-side of Russia. One of the first tasks of the regime was the recovery of these children, their education and conversion to responsible citizenship. It was a gigantic task in the conditions of the time: there were no traditions to appeal to; teachers' buildings and equipment were hard to come by; yet the problem was eventually solved with brilliant success.

"The most famous of all pioneers in this work was Anton Simeonovitch Makarenko. He overcame the physical poverty of his surroundings, the ignorance and hooliganism of his charges, and perhaps most difficult of all, continual opposition from his superiors. The story of his life and achievement is not only an interesting study in methods of education but a fascinating account of a really remarkable personality."

(It has been a recognized principle of modern education, for many decades now, that practical and constructive work makes a powerful appeal to children and youth. But the manner in which we have exploited this great and revolutionary truth—not only in India but in most other countries—has been very hesitant and unadventurous. Instead of presenting students with opportunities of doing craft work and other forms of constructive work which will *fully* stretch their capacities, teachers have been usually content to introduce craft work in small, unstimulating doses so that it has tended to become just a tame subject of the syllabus like any other subject. Where limitations of space and resources are responsible for such an approach, one can understand and even excuse the practice. But where the adoption of such a technique is deliberate, based on the assumption that that is the only respectable educational methodology, it shows a warped and narrow educational vision. In our Basic Schools, too, often the approach has been the same—a little spinning practice or

weaving or making of paper and cardboard articles or (where conditions have been favourable) a little gardening in small, neatly laid-out plots, each plot being looked after by a group of several children. Now, that *may* be a good enough way—though I doubt it—of teaching children spinning or weaving or gardening but, unless these craft practices are related to some broader social purpose and can be envisaged by children as means to a stimulating end, they cannot prove truly educative. I think Gandhiji was more far-seeing and intuitively correct in this matter than many of our orthodox and expert educationists who have since tried to put his ideas about education into practice. He had advocated the unorthodox idea of self-sufficiency in food and clothing in Basic Schools. Now, there is a stimulating challenge for teen-agers in the idea of growing their own food or weaving their own cloth or building their own huts or doing many other such things with their own hands. There is hardly any such challenge in just spinning the *takli* or plying the *charkha* or growing a few vegetables or flowers. I have had personal experience of how the entire attitude and personality of students is transformed when they are engaged on a difficult and challenging constructive project with whose purpose they can identify themselves. In a 'middle' school at Kulgam (Kashmir) students undertook the ambitious project of providing themselves with uniforms. They were poor and had hardly any resources. But they were fired by the idea and, overcoming all obstacles with the help of their teachers, they grew cotton in the school field, spun the yarn, wove the cloth, dyed it and, with the cooperation of their mothers and sisters, they got their uniforms stitched—shirts and shorts. And how proud and thrilled they felt when the project was completed and they could go about in uniforms which were the result of their own labour. In another school*—Hali School at Panipat—I saw students (I was one of them!) joining labourers and masons in the construction of the new school building—carrying bricks, making mud, working the school pump, digging the ground, and planting trees. That particular generation of students, at

* For a fuller account, see pp. 43-4.



least, had the heart-warming feeling: "This is our school. We have made it, at least to some extent, with the labour of our hands."

Let us, however, revert to Makarenko. He took charge of the first group of about 20 delinquent vagabonds who formed the nucleus of his first colony. He did not set up formal classrooms for them or attempt to 'teach' them but laboured to establish a 'community' where they had to work and learn to live together. Discussing the early stage, the author points out:

"During the first winter the work of the lads was concerned chiefly with repairing the buildings and making them habitable for the constant influx of new pupils, and making implements for use later on the farm. Some old woodwork benches had been found in a neglected barn, tools were obtained, and a joiner's shop, smithy, and wheel-wright's shop were fitted up with local carpenters and a blacksmith as instructors. One of the first things they made was a crude plough, and in April, Kalina Ivannitch began ploughing, and later sowed a few acres of oats."

Driven by its own logic and the creative ideas that had given it birth, the colony went on expanding till, two years later, it numbered 120 pupils and "the farm had been developed to such an extent that they possessed sixteen cows, about fifty pigs, eight horses, a large kitchen garden in the old colony and several orchards in the new, and a considerable area under cereals, in all about 150 acres of arable"!

In 1923, Makarenko and his young colonists chanced to come upon a large, unoccupied, neglected but finely situated, estate, with a few out-of-repair buildings, which they managed to get from the Government. They worked on its repair and improvement for about two years and managed to turn it into a show place for the social re-education of the 'morally defective'. Here again, they were confronted with large-scale work which stretched their powers to the fullest. But as the work was congenial, they rose to the occasion and, by 1925,

"the work of the farm improved out of all knowledge; the fields yielded them an all-the-year-round sufficiency of corn and vegetables and fodder for the cattle. They also cultivated a large garden and greenhouses, and there were several orchards on the terraces leading down to the Kolomak river. In addition they ran the mill, which ground all the flour for the colony and the neighbouring villages; a blacksmith's and wheel-wright's shop, which serviced their own farm implements and did similar work for outside clients; boot- and shoe-making workshops; a carpenter's shop; and the girls had their own dressmaking workshop, besides running the laundry".

By 1927, the scope of work had widened still further and educational and cultural amenities built up by the students were coming to occupy a more prominent place in the life of the community. "In addition to the usual cobbler's and carpenter's workshops, they organized a timber-yard, with seasoning lofts, saw-benches, planing and moulding machines, and they designed and made themselves a 'tenoning' machine. In the joiner's shop they made patent bee-hives, with all the necessary furniture and comb-boxes, for sale to the farmers and on order for the government. The school was extended till it had six classes; i.e. the children received full schooling up to fourteen, and many evening club activities were started, such as model-aeroplane making, sculpture, choral speaking, pantomimes, and fireworks. The library was extended till they had no more shelves for the books, and no more room for the readers, and finally they started a brass band. The chapel of the old monastery was converted into a cinema and drew a far greater body of worshippers than it had ever done before in its entire history; in fact, it became a social centre for miles around."

The culmination of this idea of 'education through work' came some years later with the setting up of the two factories in the commune for the manufacture on a commercial basis, of electric drills and cameras. What a long way these colonists had come within a few years!

I do not wish, however, to trace the development of the

colony but am concerned with the possible significance of this experiment for general education. It seems to me that, in order to irradiate education with the vigour and joy of life, it is necessary that we should provide for our children generous opportunities for doing *real* work which will educate, i.e. 'draw out', their nascent powers. In his book, 'Education Through Art', Herbert Read offers a very valuable remark on curriculum which is worth repeating:

"The curriculum should not be conceived as a collection of subjects. At the secondary stage, as at the primary stage, it should be a field of creative activities, with instruction as incidental or instrumental to the aim of these activities. If at the infant stage, these activities may be described as *play* activities, and at the primary stage as *projects*, then, at the secondary stage they merge into *constructive* works."

There is no reason to apprehend that the introduction of practical work, in this sense, will either militate against broader educational objectives or lead to forced child labour. What is objectionable is not productive work done by children—which has great educative value—but its *exploitation by others for commercial purposes*. If educationists and educational authorities will ensure that this is avoided, work can be woven into the very texture of the educational process. With his unusual insight, Bernard Shaw has expressed the same opinion with his characteristic vigour in his preface to 'Misalliance' and the point is well worth the attention of our educationists:

"There is every reason why a child should not be allowed to work for commercial profit or for the support of its parents at the expense of its own future; but there is no reason whatever why a child should not do some work for its own sake and that of the community if it can be shown that both it and the community will be the better for it. Productive work for children has the advantage that its discipline is the discipline of impersonal necessity. The

eagerness of children in our industrial districts to escape from school to the factory is not caused by lighter tasks or shorter hours in the factory, nor altogether by the temptation of wages, nor even the desire for novelty, but by the dignity of adult work, the exchange of the humiliating liability to personal assault from the lawless school-master, from which grown-ups are free, for the stern but dignified pressure of necessity to which all flesh is subject."

It would not be reasonable to expect that many of our schools—Primary or Secondary—could have the boldness of vision and the resources to remodel their education on such lines. But is it also unreasonable to hope that *some* of them may try, within their limitations, to vitalize their education by introducing constructive and practical activities of this kind and *many* of them may try out at least *one* such project and see how it reacts on the work and the spirit of the whole school? Revolutionary changes have often small beginnings and pioneering work of this kind may possibly pave the way towards the reconstruction of the worn-out pattern of our Secondary Education. The proposed pattern of reorganization of our secondary schools actually provides a congenial framework within which such experiments can be carried on. This experiment of the Gorki Colony offers many valuable ideas for those social workers also who are responsible for organizing institutions like Children's Homes, Rescue Homes, etc. which, in our country, have yet to develop into vigorous and life-giving centres of education and training for their handicapped inmates. They would do well to study the work of this great educator.

Chapter XI

RECONSTRUCTION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

*(The story of an American experiment in the reorganization
of Secondary Education)*

WE are engaged at present in the difficult task of making our secondary schools more broad-based, more practical and more *experimental* in their approach and outlook. In this attempt, Indian educators would do well to study the story of a very significant experiment in the field of Secondary Education which was carried on in America for about twelve years and which is not known in this country as fully as it deserves to be. A full account of this experiment was published by Harper and Brothers in five volumes collectively entitled "Adventures in American Education" which give the genesis, the development and the appraisal of the experiment as a whole. Recently, the International Book Club of the New Education Fellowship, London, has published a thoughtful and interesting account of the experiment in a single volume called "Teach Them to Live" by James Hemming. Educational workers, who are interested in the experiment because of its intrinsic importance as well as its relevance to some of the problems with which we are concerned, should study it in detail in these books. I propose to provide here only an *introduction* to this experiment as well as to James Hemming's excellent book on the subject.

Educational circles all over the world have been greatly dissatisfied with the general pattern of Secondary Education and they have been feeling for a long time that there is urgent need for radical reconstruction—reconstruction of its purpose, its ideology, its methods and technique, its organization and its system of assessment of results. While a great many valuable changes have taken place in the field of Primary

Education and in our own country the Basic system has adopted a radically new approach to its problems, Secondary Education has, till recently, on the whole, remained static and unchanged. Instruction has been carried on along certain set and stereotyped lines leading to a formal examination at the end, which does not pretend to test the total development of the child's personality but concerns itself only with testing knowledge and information acquired by the child out of a prescribed syllabus. Thus the real educational problem has been obscured by an unnatural insistence on the classification of certain items of knowledge and on passing certain formal examinations in them. The vital needs and problems which constitute the fabric of adolescent life have been largely ignored. It is, therefore, essential that we should begin to look upon education with new eyes and establish new patterns of thought within which to interpret its problems. We should not envisage Secondary Education in the context of books, classes, academic courses, marks and diplomas but should ask ourselves: What can we do to help the students to grow into rich and disciplined personalities and how can we help them to achieve certain well-defined social objectives and purposes? Everything else should be regarded as subsidiary to this main purpose. This also implies that, in defining the purposes of the school, teachers must study and understand the purposes of the society which the school is meant to serve and which depend, in their turn, on the life-values cherished by the members of the community. Teachers have to ask themselves constantly: What is the way of life in which our best minds have believed and which they have always stressed in their teaching? Their business is to try not only to preserve but also to promote and refine that way of life in the light of our growing needs.

This general enunciation of the problems may be taken as applicable to all the countries. It is necessary for us in India to study the experiments that are being made in other countries because, while there are many local differences, the fundamentals are, generally speaking, the same. This American experiment is the response of enlightened educational opinion

in America to the difficulties with which their secondary schools are faced and it marks a revolutionary development which we would do well to examine carefully.

BACKGROUND OF THE EXPERIMENT

During the first three decades of this century, there was widespread and growing dissatisfaction in America with the general pattern of secondary education. So, in 1930, the Progressive Education Association established a Commission to study its main defects, particularly from the point of view of defining the proper relationship between the schools and the colleges and establishing better co-ordination between them. It was also the object of the Commission to inquire as to whether and how schools could be given freedom to develop education on fundamentally new lines without affecting adversely the success of the students at the college stage. After a prolonged study of the situation and examining large numbers of teachers and other educational workers, the Commission formulated the following main defects in the system of Secondary Education.

There was considerable *obscurity of purpose* with the result that teachers had no sense of direction and did not know for what purpose they were educating the students who, in their turn, were deprived of an adequate and satisfying life in schools. There were many *educational inefficiencies* in the working of these institutions. The importance of the various school subjects was assessed not with reference to their cultural and formulative possibilities but only in regard to their value from the point of view of 'graduation'. The same principle applied to the actual contents selected for inclusion under the various subjects—they were disjointed, divorced from life and lacked unity. The main aim in learning the various subjects was the accumulation of credits and the methods of teaching were usually formal, uninspiring, and largely obsessed with the overall aim of passing the examinations. Under the circumstances, students could not naturally get any opportunity

of working together on problems of genuine significance to them nor gain the initiative and the capacity for effective action which can result only from working under natural conditions. Instead of building education on the basis of the pupil's personal interests and problems, schools were mainly content with the spoon-feeding of knowledge. Under this system, there was also considerable waste of human material because the courses were not adapted properly to the individual needs of students, some of whom were dull while others were brilliant. There was not sufficient contact between teachers and students which would enable them to understand one another properly. Thus the great educative value of proper social relationships between the teachers and the students was not realized.

Another criticism, offered by the Commission, was that students educated in secondary schools *lacked proper appreciation of the heritage of American culture* and of the problems of the American way of life. The utilitarian motive was over-emphasized and the arts were usually looked upon as decorative frills. There was no release and development of creative energies through independent work, involving initiative, intelligent thought and invention, and, therefore, the cultivation of their higher powers was handicapped. On the side of character training, stress was usually laid not on self-discipline, social responsibility and cooperation but on conformity to certain prescribed routines and the winning of certain prizes. As a consequence of this, in later life also, the students showed the same wrong sense of values. The Commission was particularly worried by the fact that a majority of schools accepted with complacency this narrowly academic view of education and did not at all realize its serious limitations and shortcomings. They were preoccupied with teaching textbooks and unmindful of the harm that they were doing to the dynamic possibilities of adolescent life.

The Commission also drew attention to the entirely unnatural relationship which existed between the schools and the colleges. Although, on an average, only one out of every six students who joined secondary schools went to college,

the college requirements dominated school curriculum. So instead of being prepared for life, they were only prepared for admission to the college which was given the first priority. This made all radical reforms difficult, if not impossible, because secondary schools could not bring about any far-reaching changes in their methods and curricula so long as they were tied to the apron-strings of the colleges and the universities. Dominated by their long-standing academic traditions, they dictated the curricula and the methods and insisted on certain prescribed levels of attainment in certain subjects for all their entrants. Unless these subjects were studied and a prescribed number of credits was obtained in them, they were not regarded as fit for receiving higher education. The colleges held the view—as in our country—that, if ‘new-fangled’ experiments were tried in curriculum-making and methods of instruction and various kinds of ‘irrelevant’ activities were introduced in schools, it will be impossible for the students to follow the courses at college intelligently and successfully. It was a realization of this *impasse*, this vicious circle in which the schools and the colleges had been caught, which led a representative group of progressive educationists to try out a very interesting experiment to determine whether it was possible to broaden and enrich the curriculum and make school life more valuable and meaningful and more closely related to pupils’ needs and problems without impairing the standards of intellectual competence required for admission to colleges. They set about to discover *experimentally* whether students can join colleges and succeed without confining themselves to the narrow range of the traditional subjects and passing in the prescribed examination. In other words their problem for investigation was: “Can a self-contained Secondary Education, intelligently related to students’ needs, form a proper introduction to education at Colleges?”

Thirty Junior and Senior High Schools of different kinds—public and private, large and small, rich and poor—were selected as the venue for the experiment—which was started in 1936—and covered the last four years of secondary schools.

corresponding roughly to the age-group of 14-18. With the concurrence of 25 colleges and universities, these schools were released from the condition of passing the admission examination conducted by the colleges. It was agreed that, as an experimental measure, these schools should be left free to define their purposes and formulate their curricula and methods in the light of their educational ideals and needs and with the full cooperation of parents, teachers, college professors and other educationists. The colleges and universities concerned agreed on their part to admit these students, educated through reorganized methods and curricula, but without the stamp of an external examination and to see how they would fare comparatively with other students who had been through the usual routine of the examination requirements. The schools undertook to provide the co-operating colleges with a full and comprehensive record of every student's work and this record was to take the place of the usual credit requirements as the basis of admission. In this record was to be included a report by the Principal about the pupil's general intelligence, his seriousness of purpose and his ability to work successfully in one or more fields of college study. It was also to provide a careful account of his school life and activities, the quality and the quantity of work done by him and the results of tests specially devised by Evaluation Committees with the object of securing as complete a picture as possible of the student's academic ability and promise.

During the next four years, about 2,000 students from these specially selected schools joined the various colleges and the problem was to find out as exactly as possible how these students, trained under new conditions, would get on during their college career. For this purpose, a special staff of six educationists was appointed who were assigned the job of following up and assessing the college careers of 1,475 students from amongst this lot. In order to make the test really valid and reliable, a control group of 1,475 students, coming from other non-experimental schools, was chosen and each student of the experimental schools was carefully matched, as far as possible, in age, sex, race, aptitude, interests and cultural and

academic background against a student of the control group. The object of the test was to ascertain how these students would fare in their studies, their examinations, and their general social and intellectual activities as compared with the students of the control group.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE EXPERIMENT

When the experiment was launched, teachers in these schools started their work with great enthusiasm because they were under the impression that, freed from the chains of the examination requirements, they would be able to organize teaching on new lines quite easily. However, they soon realized that freedom was no easy thing but implied a very severe test of their initiative, imagination, courage, wisdom and cooperation. One of the Principals made an interesting remark at an early stage of the experiment:

"My teachers and I do not know what to do with this freedom. It challenges and frightens us. I fear that we have come to love our chains!"

However, they were all bent on giving the best of themselves to the service of the experiment and, therefore, they decided to grapple with the various difficulties cooperatively. The Principals, the staff, the experts appointed for the purpose as well as the students and their parents, all joined together in planning a new educational system cooperatively and they did their best to keep alive the indomitable spirit of experimentation. After full and free discussions, they decided to concentrate on the achievement of the following objectives:

Firstly, *planning a better and more dynamic curriculum* based on a careful study of the needs of the students as well as the community. As they were freed from many of the outside restrictions they came to understand the problems and the psychology of their students much better and were

able to provide more appropriate activities and types of work for their development.

Secondly, adoption of *better teaching methods* which would bring learning into closer relationship with life-situations and thereby make it an integral factor in the development of character and personality.

Thirdly, devising *better methods of appraisal and assessment* which would be of help in finding out whether the purposes that they had in view were being really attained.

So far as the reconstruction of the curriculum was concerned, they came to the following conclusions on the basis of actual experience and intelligent discussion of issues involved:

(a) The learning of subject-matter does not constitute the essence of education and the object of schools is primarily not the imparting of knowledge but teaching students the *art of living* through making it possible for them to participate in the life of the school organized as a creative and cooperative community.

(b) The study of a large number of separate subjects divided into water-tight compartments is not as useful as the study of *broad areas* of human knowledge and experience which draw different branches of study into fruitful co-ordination. The study of a significant branch of knowledge (like general science, social studies, or learning of foreign languages as an instrument for the study and understanding of foreign culture) which can help to *implant patterns of understanding* in the students is much more important than teaching groups of facts. For this purpose some schools made whole culture-epochs the basis of study in the senior classes, e.g. Life in Ancient Greece, France in the thirteenth century, Modern China, etc. This tended to break down the traditional barriers between subjects which gained a new meaning and vitality by being related to a study of broad movements.

(c) The contents of the curriculum were selected with reference to the present concerns of youth as well as the knowledge, skills and appreciations out of which is woven the texture of adult culture. Many schools drew up, after a careful study of the existing situation, a statement of major adult

needs and the demands of the society as *guides to curriculum construction*.

(d) Schools realized that they were not concerned only with the memory or the mind of the child but their business was to understand and educate the *child's total personality* in the context of his total environment. This provided for them a criterion for judging whether their schemes of studies and activities were adequate for the manifold needs of the students.

(e) In some of the schools, education was vitalized and made real for the students by being *related to their future careers*. As a part of their educational training, they worked in different offices, workshops, factories, etc. for a few weeks in order to find out their own inclinations and aptitudes and, on the basis of reports received from these sources, teachers were able to advise the students about their future vocations.

(f) The education of the students was not cut off from the active and pulsating life of the community. In fact, they looked upon the city as "a kind of demonstration laboratory for elementary civics, economics, science and architecture". They studied and shared the life of the community and also tried to do what they could to *improve existing social conditions*.

In these various ways, the rigid walls, which had kept the schools in isolation from life and made the curriculum quite unrealistic, began to crumble down and gradually the teachers, the students and the parents came to realize that education was a great human adventure.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Teachers carrying on this experiment were inspired by the belief that schools in a democracy should be dominated by the spirit and practice of experimentation and exploration and their technique of work should involve planning, investigation, careful measurement of results and readiness to change methods, if necessary. Therefore, they did not allow their

methods to become stereotyped but each school worked them out according to its individual needs and experiences. Opportunities were provided for teachers of the participating schools and colleges to come together for discussion so that they could define their common purposes and adjust their points of view. They found that, as a result of such friendly discussions, their mental horizon was greatly extended and their understanding of the issues involved considerably enriched. Moreover, the teachers and pupils were brought into a new and closer relationship where traditional classroom lessons and methods gave place to active and cooperative work and training in democracy was carried on through the adoption of democratic ways of learning and facing situations together.

So far as the materials of instruction were concerned, it was found that the ordinary textbooks were inadequate for working on these lines and, therefore, students were encouraged to utilize many other sources of information and knowledge. They studied reports, bulletins, pamphlets, journals and newspapers and learned to make use of the library as a normal part of their work. They visited persons and institutions outside the school and thereby increased and enriched their knowledge. Sometimes invitations were sent to outside experts to visit schools and talk to the students about their special fields of work. Much greater use was made of the film and radio as effective media for the communication of knowledge and ideas. Sometimes, schools set up in the vacation 'workshops' for teachers where all necessary facilities were provided for them to study, collect, and prepare useful materials and aids for teaching. So, the entire concept of the school was changed and students actually felt that they were active participants in the acquisition of knowledge and skills and it was open to them to have recourse to all the normal agencies which are used by intelligent adults for this purpose.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

What were the results of the experiment and how were

they assessed? From the very beginning a special evaluation staff was appointed to ascertain the changes and developments taking place in the mental and social development of the students as a result of the new types of experiences and activities provided and the new methods of teaching employed in these schools. They devised about 200 tests on whose basis they maintained a complete record of the work and achievements of every student so that when he went to college they would be able to give a more accurate, full and reliable picture of his capacities than any formal examination could possibly do.

A related problem was to formulate clearly the abilities which have to be developed in the students in order to ensure their success in the colleges. Attempts were made by different institutions to lay down these criteria for success as clearly as possible and, in one of many such conferences held at the Columbia University, the following were put down as the most important capacities required in college students:

- (i) Ability to read with speed and comprehension. This is necessary for purposes of intelligent and concentrated study which is essential for every student at college.
- (ii) Facility of self-expression in speech and writing which is important not only from the academic point of view but also because the ability to put one's point of view across in an intelligent and effective manner is essential for successful living in a democracy.
- (iii) Ability to tackle and complete a hard intellectual task with zest and discipline. A student may possess the intelligence to read with comprehension and the capacity for self-expression but, if he lacks self-discipline and cannot apply himself assiduously to the completion of a project, he cannot possibly give a good account of himself in the college.
- (iv) Ability to deal with ideas, which calls for a certain amount of intellectual maturity.

It is interesting to note how different these requirements are

from the traditional requirements centring round the knowledge of a certain amount of subject-matter and how most of the students turned out by our high schools fall short of them. Most of them acquire no habits of general reading either for pleasure or for profit. They lack in self-expression and feel nonplussed when faced with any new ideas or new situations.

In arriving at an estimate of the students' capacities, the Committee of Assessment, which included teachers, consulted many different sources of evidence, e.g. school records, samples of routine work, report from instructors, results of tests, interviews and questionnaires and the special distinctions and prizes won by them. On the basis of all this evidence a full report on every student was supplied to the Principals of the colleges.

Now came what was the most difficult part of this appraisal, that is, finding out how these students fared in the colleges as a result of the new type of education which they had received. The evaluation staff prepared a rather elaborate but psychologically correct procedure for this purpose. During the four years 1936-39, about 2,000 students from these thirty schools had joined the selected colleges which had also a large number of students who had come from the ordinary schools. In order to make the test of comparative achievement really valid and reliable, they selected, as already mentioned above, 1,475 students from the experimental schools and an equal number from other schools matching each student of the first group with some student of the Control Group as carefully as possible in age, sex, race, aptitudes, interests and cultural and economic background. During their study at college, complete records of all students belonging to these two groups were maintained for purposes of comparison. After eight years of observation and comparison, there was a unanimous verdict from an independent outside Committee, consisting of college teachers as well as specially selected experts, to the effect that students of experimental schools had received a better and more stimulating general education than their fellows in the control groups who had come from the ordinary schools. It was also found that they

had done definitely better at college than their fellow students, both in academic subjects and in social and extra-curricular activities. The departure from the prescribed pattern of the high school courses had not only *not* handicapped them at college but had actually enabled them to show better results and acquire higher credits in the college courses. This also made it quite clear that there was no valid ground for the assumption that, unless a student studied a certain narrow range of prescribed traditional subjects and obtained a certain percentage of marks in them, he would not be able to do well at college. One of the incidental, but educationally important, results of the experiment was the fact that teachers gained immensely in understanding and insight and the educational stature of the participating schools improved very considerably. A few details pertaining to the results recorded may be of interest to our teachers:

“Students of the thirty schools were found to have done a little better in English, Humanities, Social Studies, Biology, Physics and Mathematics, though they were comparatively a little backward in foreign languages. They won a somewhat larger number of academic hours, their superiority over the control group varying from 1% to 10%. They compared quite favourably with the control group in qualities like general knowledge, interest in social problems, alertness of attitude towards their environment and capacity to read books.”

These results were quite satisfactory in so far as they showed that colleges need not regulate the courses and the examinations of secondary schools and that a good general education, given in an atmosphere of freedom and related primarily to the needs of the students, provided a good basis for higher education at colleges and universities. But the experimenters were a little disappointed because they had expected that their students would, on an average, show *much greater* superiority over the control group. The evaluation staff, therefore, decided

to conduct another 'test within the test' with the object of finding out the comparative merits of students educated in the six *most* experimental and the six *least* experimental of these thirty schools. They knew that, while some schools had made full use of their freedom and departed radically from the traditional pattern, others had made only comparatively few and minor changes. So they selected 335 students from both sets of schools and matched them against an equal number taken from their respective control groups. They found, to their surprise and satisfaction, that the results of this second test triumphantly vindicated the assumption from which they had started, because the students of the most experimental schools showed a marked superiority over those in the control group. Thus in 'intellectual curiosity' they had a lead of 11% and in 'relations to society' a lead of 20% over the control group, while those from the least experimental schools showed no superiority in the first and only a 9% superiority in the second. This naturally accounted for the fact that, on the average, the students of the thirty schools had not shown as marked a superiority as was expected.

The pioneering work done by these teachers was no doubt very hard and exacting, but it was their unanimous opinion that it had given them the thrill of a creative adventure and added greatly to their efficiency and understanding of educational problems. Although it undoubtedly involved far more intellectual and physical labour, none of them was prepared to go back to the comparative safety and security of the tradition-ridden school. It should be recalled, as stated earlier, that schools of *all* types were included in the experiment—village schools and city schools, State schools and private schools, schools with a high teacher-pupil ratio and schools with a low teacher-pupil ratio. Many of the schools were also handicapped by the fact that they had no special resources—in money or equipment—to work out this experiment but, since they were keenly interested in the idea of giving a new deal to education, the ingenuity of the students and the staff and the contributions made by the parents or by the local community were able to overcome these handicaps. This

point is worth mentioning because lack of financial resources is often pleaded as an excuse in our country for not taking up any educational experiments at all!

I have given this brief and rather inadequate survey of this important experiment in the hope that some of our teachers and educational institutions might be persuaded to look upon problems of Secondary Education from a new angle and might try and see what can be done to bring it nearer to life and make it more intelligently responsive to the psychology and the needs of our students. I do not know how far our colleges and universities would be willing to cooperate in carrying out such a radical experiment—though there is a somewhat more favourable climate of opinion today than before—but, even without securing their cooperation, there are a number of suggestive ideas thrown up by the experiment which we can try and work out in our schools.

Chapter XII

PLACE OF SOCIAL EDUCATION IN NATIONAL LIFE *

IT will be helpful if, as a background for discussing this problem, we could go over what may be regarded as the area of common agreement about Social Education amongst intelligent workers in this field. It may not be intellectually 'glamorous' to re-state a few obvious truths but it is useful to know where we stand and from where we are to start.

There is now a fairly widespread realization of the urgency of the existing educational situation. Politicians, administrators, social workers as well as educationists feel that no planning or social and economic reconstruction will be possible unless Adult Education is provided not only on a larger scale but also quickly and in a generous measure. In the past, too, many far-sighted individuals and groups did realize the importance of this work but the sheer magnitude of the problem—the education of about 350 millions!—led them to the pessimistic conclusion that it was not a 'practical' or 'feasible' proposition—these are useful words, for they and their kind can always be used to camouflage lack of courage and imagination! But during the last twenty years, the tempo of change has been quickened enormously. We have seen with our own eyes the success of gigantic Five-Year Plans in other countries; we have observed how, under the stress of war needs, co-ordinated and cooperative human effort can achieve miracles of production as well as destruction; we have become acutely conscious of the tremendous part that the modern 'media of mass communication' like the press, the radio and the cinema can play in the education (or mis-education!) of adults. Under these changed circumstances there is far less justification for facing this issue with folded

* From the Presidential Address at the *All-India Adult Education Conference* at Trivandrum.

hands and a sense of resignation and we have no alternative today but to go ahead with vigorous schemes of educational expansion.

It is not, however, *only* the greater *technical* efficiency that we possess in organizing large-scale enterprises—social, economic or educational—which has forced this issue to the front. There are also other significant and positive reasons which may be described as *political and human*. We are entering upon a new era in national life which will determine, perhaps for centuries, the shape of things to come in our country. Even the bitter, fratricidal conflicts that poison our national life will roll away sooner or later, like the threatening clouds of a nightmare, and we shall emerge into the clear day of reason and freedom and common sense. But, if I may repeat a truism, political freedom cannot, by itself, guarantee the 'good life' for any community or people. We know only too well how, many nations, which are politically free, are enslaved by other chains which bar their way to the 'good life' which is really the gracious fruit of hard and socially motivated work. People cannot, in fact, retain even their political liberty unless they are prepared to pay the price for it in terms of that 'eternal vigilance' which calls for proper civic and political education. If our objective is high and we wish to use political freedom as a stepping-stone to social freedom and economic democracy, then obviously we need a much higher standard of education amongst the masses of the people. Otherwise, there is the ever-present danger that the so-called 'freedom' may be exploited by intelligent but unscrupulous groups or persons for their own unworthy ends. This is what I would call the *political justification* for an immediate and large-scale campaign of Adult Education.

The *human justification* follows directly from these considerations. The social conscience of man is perhaps more acutely sensitive than it has ever been in the past—I am speaking, of course, of the general tendency and not of great *individuals* whose spirit has always been finally responsible to great human values—of the bitter tragedy that a large majority of our fellow-men are literally *starving in a world of plenty*,

both in the material and the cultural sense. In *actual* fact there are ample material and cultural resources at the disposal of the modern man—*potentially*, they are unlimited! But the 'masses' continue to lead poor, barren, unsatisfying lives, frustrated in mind and body, with access neither to economic security nor to cultural riches which are man's most valuable heritage. The greatest single problem of the twentieth century, in my opinion, is to retrieve them from this cruel impasse and to *enrich their lives with significance*. Modern conscience at its best should not, and will not, be satisfied with regarding the poor peasant and the labourer and everyone else engaged in humble, everyday productive work as just good enough to do his job and entitled at best to protection from starvation and acquiring the rudiments of learning. He is a human being in his own right with a capacity to enter into the kingdom of the mind and the riches of the spirit—with eyes for pictures and ears for music and some appreciation and discernment for good literature and drama and art and other manifestations of beauty in life. He will *not* be denied access to these treasures which certain privileged classes have hitherto regarded as their special preserve. This is a far cry, indeed, from the traditional view which identifies Adult Education with the imparting of literacy. What a travesty of truth is that limited view and what a petty boon is this bare literacy! It is often lost more quickly than it is acquired and it fails to make any impress on the life of the rather unwilling and bewildered adult grappling with the mysteries of the alphabet in his moments of fatigued leisure. In fact, there is a rather curious but *practically* important relationship between literacy and the broader concept of Adult Education as Social Education that we are *now* beginning to accept. Experience has taught us that unless we can bring the total impact of an enriched Social Education to bear on the life of the illiterate adult and widen his horizons of knowledge and appreciation, we cannot succeed even in our narrow objective of imparting literacy. That is the *only* way in which we can enlist his active cooperation in our efforts. Surveying the present position as a whole, it may well be claimed that, in the field

of Adult Education, there is a marked *shift of emphasis*—from small-scale to large-scale effort, from narrow literacy, the hope that a dubious signature should take the place of an authentic thumb impression, to a generously conceived *Social Education* which is to include training for intelligent citizenship as well as cultural appreciation.

THE DEBIT AND THE CREDIT SIDE

I have tried to assess these tendencies because it gives us the background as well as the perspective of our problem. What I am talking about is *not* what is being *actually* done but what our best informed and mentally alert workers think *should* be done. It is only in a few centres of progressive educational effort that anything like this has been attempted—at the Jamia in Delhi which had the vision of a Zakir Husain and the organizing ability and energy of the late S. R. Qidwai, at Santiniketan in Bolpur which has ventured out of its quiet, cultured abode and developed extra-mural activities and contacts, by the All-India Adult Education Association which has tried to keep aloft the banner of right ideas. There have also been several campaigns in the last few decades in various States and there is the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education which attempts, for the first time, to present a comprehensive, full-length survey of the position and gives an outline programme. This is practically all that we have on the *credit* side.

On the *debit* side we have, firstly, the stark fact that, *quantitatively* speaking, very little has been done. About 85% of our people can neither read a printed page nor put marks intelligently on ballot paper nor carry out simple everyday calculations. If someone were to prepare a literacy map of the world and colour the illiterate areas of the earth black, India will, to our shame, look rather like a dark continent! This is a state of affairs which makes one feel both ashamed and indignant—ashamed that a country, which prides itself on one of the oldest cultural traditions in the world, should

have come to this pass; indignant because we have been content to put up with this blot on our reputation for so long! There have been sporadic attempts from time to time on the part of Governments or voluntary organizations to establish centres for Adult Education and occasionally great public enthusiasm has been worked up in its behalf. But there has been no steady, persistent and well-organized movement on a nationwide scale for the liquidation of illiteracy. The first dawns of a realization of the magnitude and urgency of the problem are to be found in the Plan for the Post-War Educational Development in India which envisaged a 25-year programme to make nine crores of persons literate. But this Report has only received a sort of 'approval in principle' from Governments and there is no knowing whether or when the scheme will be fully implemented. There was a brave attempt a few years back to push forward a big programme but as usual it fell through for want of funds. That can hardly be regarded as a promising and hopeful picture.

It is impossible to exaggerate either the great urgency or the overall importance of this problem. Whether you are interested in individual development or social reconstruction, in training for citizenship in a democracy or raising standards of efficiency in work, in the exploitation of the people by the demagogues or in their protection from the demagogues—whatever your pet pre-occupation may be—you cannot make much headway in this age without an educated public. After all, the success of all movements depends on the quality of men and women participating in it and we cannot possibly release the latent powers of the human personality without subjecting it to suitable educative influences. The depth and richness of a personality depends primarily on its dynamic relationship with its human and natural environment, assimilating from it whatever it has to offer and contributing to it all that it can. Through these educative contacts, man develops those distinctive characteristics which elevate him above the brutes—his Reason, his sense of Right and Wrong and his appreciation of Beauty. It is their proper cultivation which has given mankind Science and Philosophy, Justice and Ethics

and all the various flowerings of Art and, as his life impinges on these three limitless frontiers, man achieves a deepening and broadening of personality. In his book, *About Education*, Joad brings out this point with his usual clarity:

"To the man of trained mind and developed tastes, the world becomes literally a larger place, larger and more exciting. He is able to see in it more beauty, more variety, more scope for his sympathy and understanding than he saw before. So far as the understanding of the world is concerned, while education diminishes the certainty of what is, it widens his sense of the possibilities of what may be and transforms the world from a humdrum scene of workshop, factory and office to a universe of mystery and treasure-house of beauty."

If you agree with this view that education deepens our appreciation of meanings, how poor and barren are the lives of hundreds of millions of our countrymen—those who are illiterate and uneducated as well as those who have received the present type of scanty education which leaves the mind unliberated and the emotions untouched! To them the world of the mind is a closed book and Art makes no appeal and life is 'a prison whose walls are brute facts from which the spirit lacks the wings of knowledge to escape'. It is a curious irony that, in some respects, the so-called educated classes are even worse off than the illiterate peasants and craftsmen for, while the latter achieve a certain grace of wisdom and practical understanding of life through work, the former lead lives that are often barren and artificial. So our problem widens out to cover both the categories and Adult Education is seen to have a much wider connotation than mere literacy. It will really *begin*, and not end, when literacy has become widespread in India. For, it is only when early education has awakened our intelligence and quickened our appreciation that we can begin to take an interest in the things of the mind or respond to the appeal of Art. It is with this *wider* aspect of Adult (or Social) Education that we are concerned

for the present; for, experience in other countries has shown that mere literacy is no great moral or intellectual or even practical gain. If we give people the capacity to read without giving them the right literary tastes and judgment; if they acquire the habit of reading papers or listening to political speeches or the radio without cultivating the intelligence to examine critically the written and spoken propaganda aimed at them from all sides; if they continue to be at the mercy of every advertising quack—commercial, medical, political, social or religious—then, surely, their literacy is neither a cultural gain nor a means towards building up a sane and well-balanced outlook on life. We must clearly realize that education is not a process which begins at the age of 6 or 7 and ends—or can safely end—at 14 or 15; it is co-terminus with life and, in every civilized country, people should remain under appropriate educational influences not only in childhood and adolescence but also in adulthood and old age. When man ceases to learn, when he becomes incapable of acquiring newer ranges of understanding and appreciation, he may be taken as dead, even though he may be physically alive. If that is so, we can see that the problem is neither simple nor cheap and will not be solved unless our policy is inspired by a generous vision of what Adult Education means and what it can achieve. There is no point in society or Government salving its conscience by establishing a number of centres in dark and dingy rooms or disused sheds or rickety school buildings where bored and listless teachers pretend to instruct adults who are, if anything, even more bored and listless and who have to be bribed or forced to attend these classes. Do you believe it is possible to secure the interest and enthusiasm, or even the attendance, of adults at such classes, hopefully called 'Adult Education Centres', held in ugly little rooms without proper seating or lighting arrangements, without books and charts and other equipment, without any facilities for developing social and corporate activities? I am well aware of the value placed on simplicity and the nostalgia for 'schools under trees' and, I admit, both have their proper place. But I am not prepared to regard the existing depressing *milieu* as good

enough for the education of the masses and, if austerity in this sense is such a good thing, why do not the preachers practise it for a change! I am convinced that adult education can be organized only as an enthusiastic crusade for improving the social, cultural and political standards of the people—it must be done either that way or not at all. The best brains of the community interested in such work should place their services at the disposal of these centres—which may well be called ‘People’s Colleges’ in the case of centres of post-literacy education meant for the literates—and the material conditions should be the best that available finances and ingenuity can devise: a small but comfortably equipped Library and Reading Room, a Lecture Hall, a couple of rooms for discussion groups and Art and Craft work and social facilities of the type one finds in a good club. The premises need not be luxurious—I am *not* asking for luxury—and the size of the building will depend on the needs of the locality. But it *must* be neat and artistic where people will come spontaneously—to read or talk or discuss things or meet common friends or practise their hobbies—because it is the best place in the locality for the purpose.

THE FINANCIAL BOGEY

Does that sound too ambitious? Will it be argued that our ‘poor’ country cannot afford to provide educational facilities of such magnitude? Actually there is only *one* kind of poverty that is incurable, *the poverty of the spirit*. All others can be tackled if we are seriously inclined to do so. It is a trite remark—but it will bear repetition—that this ‘poor’ country was actually able to spend hundreds of millions on a war that was none of her making. Is there any reason, in the nature of things, why an equal measure of effort should not be possible in the cause of education, which is ultimately the cause of peace and humanity? I believe it is wrong to look upon great problems of national reconstruction from the viewpoint of the narrow-minded financier: “We have a budget of so many

millions and, on this 'lavish' scale, Adult Education alone would cost so much"—so it is ruled out as an impracticable proposition! To my mind, the proper approach is *not* whether we can afford a good educational system or a sound health policy but *whether we can afford to do without them*. If it is agreed that no country can afford to remain predominantly unhealthy and ignorant and culturally impoverished, then it is the business of the Government, the Finance Department and the Planners of National Economy to find the money and, if this involves large-scale industrialization or modernization of Agriculture or tapping new sources and attempting better distribution of wealth, let us by all means go ahead with such schemes and not hold up urgent national enterprises on the ground that money is not available. I think there is a great deal of truth in the old Indian proverb: "Money is the dirt of the hand." Let us not make it the arbiter of our cultural destiny!

THE RECORD OF OTHER COUNTRIES

What I am advocating is *not* something utopian that has not been tried anywhere in the world. It would be interesting to recall what other countries have done or are trying to do in this field. In the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R., which differ basically in their political and economic structure, there is a keen appreciation of the value of such education and widespread cultural facilities have been provided for the people in Schools and Colleges, in Clubs and Institutes, in Music and Drama and Discussion groups and many other agencies working for raising the level of popular culture and efficiency. The 'Folk Schools' of Denmark which have won a deservedly high reputation, have brought culture down from its 'ivory tower' and presented it as an offering to the common people working on their farms or in their factories and workshops. "What is most important", remarked an Inspector who visited these schools, "is not the *amount* of knowledge the students acquire but the fact that they are *mentally and emotionally*

roused. They may forget a good deal of the instruction; but they leave the schools different people, having learnt to hear, to see, to think and to use their powers"—no mean achievements, these! And it is not without significance that though these schools are mainly preoccupied with *culture*, they have also been responsible, more or less directly, for improvement in the general standard of *Agriculture*. During the years 1939-1945, Great Britain, went through the most terrible war in human history, from which she emerged battered and financially bleeding—but *not* broken in spirit! In 1944, she placed on the Statute Book her new Education Act which has increased her already generous education budget by about one hundred million pounds. It provides, amongst other things, for a rich, generous and varied system of Adult Education which would ensure that all her citizens have at their disposal a good deal of what national culture has to offer and the marvels of modern technique can convey. I should like to refer particularly to the establishment of People's Colleges (or Country Colleges, as they are called) where all young persons, above the age of 15 or 16, will be required to attend either for two or three half days a week or (in rural areas) for a whole term continuously. These colleges will provide 'further education', including physical, practical and vocational training to develop their various aptitudes and capacities and prepare them for the exacting responsibilities of modern citizenship. I visited one such institution at Bottisham, near Cambridge, where an English educationist of great insight and vision, Henry Morris, has established a number of colleges in order to cater to the educational and cultural needs of the surrounding villages. This college is housed in an attractively planned and well equipped building and provides a large variety of activities—social, academic, practical and artistic—which are welcomed and utilized by the local communities to enrich their individual and collective life. You can find an enthusiastic account of one such college at Impington in Joad's delightfully readable book, *About Education*, a few lines of which are well worth quoting:

"A whole wing is reserved for adults, complete with kitchen, canteens, common rooms, games room, lecture room, and library. . . . Here the life of the village is centred; here the various clubs, the domestic and musical societies hold their meetings; here the debating society conducts its discussions. . . . The college is, in fact, a hive of activity where you can eat, drink, dance, make merry and fall in love as well as learn, attend lectures, talk, and practise the art and crafts of cookery, metal work, wood work, painting, music. . . . I wish I had the descriptive power to convey the comforts and grace of the environment in which these various activities take place. I can only emphasize the general impression of light and air and space, of graceful and harmonious lines, of rich and tasteful furnishings, of walls hung with the prints of some of the great pictures of the world. . . ."

It is not only through the new institutions like People's College or the Service of Youth, contemplated in the British Education Act, that a nationwide cultural campaign has been undertaken. There are many other official and non-official agencies, with adequate resources, which are engaged in tackling different aspects of this problem, e.g. the Workers' Educational Association, the British Council, whose function is to interpret British culture to the Britishers as well as other peoples and the Arts Council which has been striving, with vigour and imagination, to bring better music and drama and pictures within the ken and the enjoyment of the common man. One way of reacting to such attractive attempts is to dismiss them regretfully as too utopian for this country. But I harbour the hope that it would be gradually possible to win over an increasing number of administrators and educationists to the view that our people must also, in due course, have facilities of the same amplitude. If all these things are necessary in a country like England, where there is almost 100% literacy and the availability of educational and cultural resources is incomparably greater, how much more urgent is the need to provide suitable cultural facilities for Indian

villages where people lead lives which are often mentally and materially sub-human!

The main difficulty that the worker in this field encounters is how to win over the interest and attention of the adults. The answer, in theory, is that Adult Education should be made so patently useful and attractive that the adults will be drawn to it naturally. The worker should realize that old and tired-out men, battling against the rough deal that life has meted out to them, feel no thrill of pleasure in poring over the mysteries of the alphabet and anything that resembles a school or proclaims itself as such has no hold on their imagination. He should, therefore, resolutely disabuse his mind of the two fond illusions that the centre is a sort of makeshift school and that he is there to teach! They have to be approached quite differently. The starting point should be their *natural* centres of interest, e.g. their crops and cattle, their games and sports, their social and religious celebrations, their economic difficulties and problems, even their pet grouse against those who make life difficult for them. Thus approached—with sincerity, not with high-browed condescension or propaganda motives—they often react with unexpected enthusiasm and interest and, once these have been aroused, the intelligent and tactful teacher can guide them not only into the proper understanding of their practical problems but also into the rich kingdom of culture and ideas. Sir Richard Livingstone makes a very good point in his well-known book *The Future in Education* when he points out:

“All drive comes from the spirit and, if you can give men a sense of what human civilization means, you give them the motive to acquire and use knowledge. Make people disinterested and keen and they will do anything; without these qualities all the knowledge in the world is of little use.”

This truth is applicable as much to the Indian as to the English adult. But our technique will naturally have to be different. The mental zest of the average Indian peasant and

worker has become overlaid and repressed by an inexorable economic lot which often leaves him no breathing time or inclination to respond to and enjoy culture. Let his education start from these hard and obstinate facts and face them with sincerity and courage and you will soon find him amenable to the appeal, both of the knowledge which liberates the mind and the culture which irradiates and inspires the spirit. Thus, as I visualize these 'People's Colleges' or 'Community Centres' in the India of the future, they will cater for people at different intellectual levels and provide various kinds of useful, liberalising activities—some to improve practical efficiency, others to stimulate literary and cultural interests, still others to provide training in intelligent, active and socially conscious citizenship. They will not be formal educational institutions divorced from life but an integral *part* of that life, with the special function of presenting it in a more coherent, meaningful and stimulating manner. The recently established Janta Colleges in our country and the social education work being done in our Community Projects and National Extension blocks are pointers in the same direction. Envisaged at this level, adult education is an exacting responsibility and it is obviously not the job for ill-paid, over-worked, unwilling or poorly educated workers. It is essential that the colleges and universities too should associate themselves actively with it and their teachers and students should learn to share their knowledge and culture with the people who have been denied the opportunities vouchsafed to them. By doing so, they will not only let a breath of fresh air and a shaft of light into the darkened lives of the masses: they may also discover to their surprise that, in the act of sharing their cultural heritage with the people, their own minds have become clearer and their understanding of the world fuller and more practical. For he who only *takes* and is not prepared to *give* is not only a moral defaulter but is likely to remain a mentally superficial person, lacking in the grace and wisdom which comes from doing socially useful work. Thus work like that of University settlements and the University Extension Movement, may well be regarded as a valuable part of students' social and

intellectual education which must find a fully recognized place in our universities.

THE TASK OF THE ALL-INDIA ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Let us not, however, paint too gloomy a picture of the contemporary scene. A good deal of thought has been given to the programme during the last few years and the Post-War Plan of the Advisory Board and its Committees' Reports give us a fairly comprehensive idea of what is to be done. In any case, no fool-proof programme can be perfected on paper; it is ultimately in the crucible of action that programmes are not only tested but fully developed. Action generates its own dynamism which not only distinguishes between what is good and bad, what is practicable and impracticable but also provides new points of view and new goals. Perhaps in one locality we may start in a modest way, providing only facilities for social contacts, or a discussion group or a literacy centre or a games club. But if our psychological approach is right and the workers are sincere and sensible, we will find many new and fruitful avenues opening out before us. I have seen this happen over and over again in my experience and I have no doubt the experience of others will confirm this position. An organization like the Indian Adult Education Association can render useful service in two ways. It should *mobilize public opinion* and political influence to ensure that an immediate attack is made on the Adult Education front on a nationwide scale and to see that *all States do* actually launch carefully thought-out programmes. Secondly, it should provide what I might call *technical leadership*, i.e. offer sound advice on any issues that may be referred to it by official and non-official organizations engaged in this work and should conduct small-scale experiments in new ideas by way of demonstration, e.g. by establishing a People's College, organizing special training courses for leaders, taking up Community Welfare work and so on. Some such work is actually being taken up

increasingly by this and other non-official organizations and the recent establishment of a National Centre of Fundamental Education by the Education Ministry could give it greater coherence and direction.

UTILIZING THE NEW MEDIA OF EDUCATION

But there is one special aspect of the programme to which I should like to refer because it has not received due attention in our country—the part that agencies of propaganda like the film, the radio and the press can play in this field. This point was brought home to me strongly when I was working on a Unesco Commission dealing with the ‘media of mass communication’. In many advanced countries, they have already become irresistibly powerful agencies for propaganda and the concern of enlightened and progressive opinion is to improve the quality of their programmes and output. In our country they are, comparatively speaking, in their infancy and, therefore, we have to deal simultaneously with the twofold problem of expansion and development as well as proper orientation. This is in some ways an advantage, because, in countries like the United States and Russia, powerful vested interests or the State have secured a rigid hold on them which it is no easy matter to dislodge. In India, while the general tendency and set-up is similar, the evil has not taken very deep root yet. We have no powerful Hollywood, no competing commercial Radio Stations, no unholy Press combines though that danger is now beginning to materialize. It is, therefore, more easily possible for a wide-awake National Government to adopt a policy which will stop these powerful agencies from passing completely into the grip of people who have no social conscience or sense of social responsibility and whose only criterion of success is the ‘box-office’. In the world of the future, the man with the money bags should not have the authority to determine what mental and cultural fare is to be offered to its citizens. But this can only be done if the people as well as Government have the intelligence to visualize

all these agencies as integral parts of a single, coherent educational pattern, so that schools, colleges, adult education centres, journals and newspapers, films, plays, radio programmes may all pull in the same direction—the direction of cultural enrichment and international goodwill—instead of working at cross purposes and nullifying the good results that might have otherwise ensued. In some ways, these agencies work much more quickly and effectively than ordinary educational institutions and, in a country like ours where there is so much to be done, we cannot afford to ignore these powerful instruments of visual and auditory education. I would plead for a careful study of the whole problem with the object of integrating them properly into our educational structure.

WHAT IS TO TRIUMPH—HUMANITY OR BEASTLINESS?

I would like to invite your attention to a problem which is not normally reckoned as forming a part of Adult Education work but which is so important, so desperately urgent that to my mind it overshadows all other problems at present. If it is not tackled in a courageous and imaginative manner, no other problem has the remotest chance of being satisfactorily dealt with—I refer to the cultural crisis through which we are passing and to the problem of communal understanding and goodwill which in its wider sense has been discussed elsewhere in this book. What has happened in recent years in the way of communal frenzy in the different parts of the country is a source of shame, almost of despair, to all who work in the field of education and who have watched, helplessly, some of the decencies and civilized ways of life crumbling to pieces before their eyes. As Dr. Zakir Husain once put it aptly, it is not today a question of which party wins or loses but whether beastliness is to be allowed to triumph over humanity. One of our primary and urgent concerns, in all programmes of Adult Education, should be to rebuild the shattered fabric of these human values and to

instil into *all* our fellow-men and women an active devotion to and concern for decency, tolerance, freedom and respect for human life. I cannot discuss here all the manifold ways in which this may be attempted; we must learn to cherish the common *objective* but we can think out different *means* for attaining it in the light of our special circumstances. But there is one idea—the germ of an idea—that has always attracted me and which I should like to place before you for what it is worth. I would like to see built up, in every village and city and town, in every school and college and university, *Peace Brigades*, consisting of members of *all* local communities who would pledge themselves to resist with all their power—if necessary, to lay down their lives in the attempt—mass frenzy and communal madness whenever and wherever it raises its head. What Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said courageously during the Bihar riots needs to be repeated on behalf of hundreds of thousands of individuals of all groups and communities. He had remarked, ‘If you want to kill a Muslim, you will have to kill me first and then do so over my dead body.’ If these Peace Brigades—all members dressed alike and pledged to unity—seriously proclaimed to an infuriated mob ‘If you want to kill any Hindu or Muslim or Sikh you will have to kill us first and then do so over our dead bodies’—if they said so and really meant it, I cannot believe that even a mad mob would dare attack them indiscriminately. And even if they did do so, once or twice, I can think of no more enviable or glorious or *useful* sacrifice—in the cause of human brotherhood and decency. These values are, at least, not *less* important in life than political wranglings and group rivalries. For what will it avail us if we gained our pet political objectives, or even the whole world for that matter, and lost our soul in the bargain? May we not perchance discover, when it is too late, that we have paid too high a price for our ‘success’ and that, in the very moment of our triumph, it tastes like dead ashes in our mouth? I would appeal earnestly to all political leaders, teachers and parents, to young men and women who inhabit this great land to realize in what direction we have been moving in recent years and—but for the grace

of God and the courageous guidance of a few persons of unusual calibre—where we might have been and to cry halt to such tendencies. It is not merely a question of a few hundred or a few thousand lives being lost in Pakistan and India; if such tendencies persist it would mean a permanent poisoning of human relations; it would be a denial of decency and kindness and neighbourly virtues, a denial of the basic values of culture and civilization. We, who teach and educate and fight for a better life, cannot tolerate this state of affairs and it is our duty and our privilege to throw ourselves on the side of decency, in this bitter conflict. No one, I am convinced, dare stand aloof from this struggle, for, if I may quote the words of the Holy Quran, we should

“beware of the catastrophe which, when it befalls, will not be confined to those who have specially transgressed (but will sweep all into its train).”

Chapter XIII

EDUCATING ADULTS FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP *

IN our country today, we are up against a serious situation and all our thoughts and energies must be directed to meeting this challenge. What has happened during the last years—both the good and the evil—has put an entirely new complexion on the problem of Adult Education and all of us, who are interested in the future well-being of our country, must try to understand the urgent new issues which have now crystallized themselves before teachers and educationists. In the recent past we have all been conscious, in a general way, of the importance of Adult Education; we did realize that it was impossible to build a free and progressive State or to improve the economic and social conditions of the people without launching a nation-wide programme of educating the adults and we all chafed and fretted at the failure of Government—as well as non-official agencies—to do so. During the last few years, however, certain things have happened—with what seems like the abruptness and the stunning force of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption—which have given a wholly different orientation to our task. This is not merely a superficial metaphor but is meant to bring out the true nature and genesis of these changes. To the unwary and the unintelligent, a volcanic eruption or an earthquake is an inexplicable and unexpected freak of nature for which they are never prepared. In blissful ignorance, they continue to carry on their activities by the side of a deceptively quiet volcano, taking its smiling appearance at its face value and ignoring the forces of destruction that may be preparing themselves underground, with ruthless persistence, for the final burst-up. Intense heat would be generated in the bowels of earth; the rocks and

* From an Address at the *Fifth All-India Adult Education Conference*.

stones and metals, hidden beneath, will become molten lava; water will turn into hissing steam; the resistance of the crust will be weakened and, as soon as a physically favourable balance of conditions is established, smoke and lava and burning stones will be hurled out, destroying, with implacable efficiency, men, women, children and all the products and landmarks of their gracious culture. And the fools will complain that there had been no previous notice of the catastrophe—as if natural catastrophes were Assembly questions requiring a polite and well-regulated previous notice!

NEED FOR A RADICAL POLICY

This is what has happened in India in recent years. We have, in the first place, achieved our freedom but it is not the result of anything special or spectacular done by us during the last few years, but is the culmination of a long political struggle waged for over 60 years, which had gained special momentum since the first World War. Momentous happenings in the international field did undoubtedly accelerate and facilitate the process—rather like softening the outer crust of the volcano. But essentially, we have won our freedom, not suddenly and unexpectedly, but as a result of the operation of political and human forces working over a long period of time. This freedom, however, finds us unprepared, morally and mentally, to shoulder the great new responsibilities which it has brought in its train. We did gain a great deal of *political* education through our political activities but it was primarily a training in the technique of fighting—even though the fight was mainly non-violent. But this transfer of power to the people and the challenge to construct what is good and socially desirable, instead of merely criticizing what was bad and reactionary and socially unjust, bring up new needs and problems and call for new qualities and attitudes. If this great and ancient country, which is at the same time a State newly born into freedom, is to survive—and inexorable Time awaits no one's pleasure or convenience!—we must adopt bold and

quick and radical policies to create the proper intellectual and emotional atmosphere and cultivate the right social and moral responses. Education is, no doubt, a powerful telic force for re-shaping the ideas of people but if we rely only on the normal processes of formal education imparted to children and young men and women in schools and colleges—and this education is really effective and well directed—it will take a very long time, at least one whole generation, before any appreciable results can be achieved.

ADULT EDUCATION A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

What are we then to do? Obviously this offers a great opportunity to Adult Education—conceived in its broadest and most generous sense—to contribute to the formation of national ideology and character. Speaking personally, I confess that, while I have always had a fairly clear idea of the significance of Adult Education in national life, its urgency and the poignant immediacy of its need had never come home to me with such force as it has come during the last few years. While formerly it appeared to be both desirable and necessary and one knew that we could not make much headway in any direction without raising considerably the cultural and intellectual level of the 'masses', I have become increasingly conscious that now *it is a matter of life and death* which can be ignored or postponed only at grave peril. If we are to build a workable democratic order, in which the reasoned will of the majority is to prevail, is it not necessary to ensure that that will is intelligent, enlightened and inspired by benevolent, rather than malevolent, motives and purposes? The happenings which preceded and followed the partition of the country and what has happened more recently, particularly with reference to linguistic controversies, underline this danger with implacable clarity. An uneducated democracy, swayed by random gusts of fanaticism and prejudice and invitingly responsive to the machinations of self-seeking demagogues, can be even a greater menace to peace, security

and happiness than any other form of government. To say so is not to decry democracy but to safeguard it against the corruption of its social, moral and intellectual content.

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

The primary concern of the educationists of democracy should be to strengthen its intellectual and moral defences against two serious dangers—the uncritical and credulous acceptance of propaganda as truth and the breakdown of the sense of social solidarity which results in selfish clash of interests and the generation of suicidal conflicts between different communal, sectarian and geographical groups. Let us examine this in more concrete terms. In our country, the advent of political freedom and democratic institutions has greatly increased the *ex officio* importance of the masses. In order to gain political influence and power, ambitious and unscrupulous persons—as well as good ones—have to seek their votes. Now, there are two ways in which we can win the support and the following of the people—either through patient and devoted service or through the exploitation of their ignorance and the prejudices which are often associated with it. The first is a difficult and uphill path which is chosen only by persons of high moral calibre—those who are anxious to give and not to grab. The latter is the easy and the downhill path where one can count on the demoralising help of the downward momentum! This is the path that appeals naturally to the ambitious and the aggressive type, more anxious to appropriate persons and things to its selfish ends than to devote its energies to service. Thus the main difference between them is that, while the former regards people as *ends* in themselves, who have to be cherished for their own sake and guided with affection and care towards the ‘good life’, the latter looks upon them as mere *means* that can be exploited to gain political power and influence for themselves. In a democracy these two types are always in conflict and its ultimate fate depends largely on which of them is able to

triumph and gain the confidence and support of the people.

THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA

One of the primary objects of social and civic education for adults should be to strengthen the critical sense of the people so that they might distinguish between self-seekers and true social servants, between incitement to fanaticism, which finds an easy access to our lower nature, and appeals to decency and truth which challenge our higher nature and put it on its mettle. This has become one of the major problems of Adult Education today because the new and powerful media of mass communication threaten to swamp independence of thought and judgment and make it possible for strong and influential vested interests to produce set patterns of thought and conduct in hundreds of millions of human beings. In fact, every new skill and device that education and science place at our disposal is attended with its own specific dangers. Adult Education aims at teaching people to read, i.e. to translate certain written symbols into sounds and their meanings. But as soon as a person is equipped with this power, he finds himself waylaid by newspapers and periodicals many of which are concerned less with the propagation of truth and good fellowship than with purveying hatred and untruth. He gains an entry into the world of books but not necessarily into the kingdom of the mind and may spend a good deal of his leisure—as a large majority of literate, book-reading persons actually do—in reading stuff that is artistically and intellectually third-rate. Science has given us the radio, the film and the talkies which, amongst them, are pouring an unending avalanche of auditory and visual impressions on millions of persons all over the world on an unprecedented scale. Speeches, songs, stories, dramas, comics, informational features come crowding on us all the time. Yet how small is the percentage of items which can really deepen our sympathy and understanding, or exalt our emotions or improve our artistic tastes and standards!

Most of them are out merely to amuse people at their lowest level so as to make quick and easy and, to my mind, *tainted* money for the producers. In the scathing words of Upton Sinclair, talking of the American mass media, their code "expresses a boundless cynicism concerning human nature: an unfaith become a faith. It is contempt fanned by the fires of greed; it is treason to the soul of man erected into a business system, organized, systematized and spread into every corner of the earth. This particular 'hunk of cheese' is being offered to a world tottering upon the edge of an abyss!" And, against this formidable array of forces, we have nothing at our disposal but the neglected, half-starved, ill-appreciated agency of education—a David pitted against so many seeming Goliaths! Yet there is no reason why education, broadly conceived and generously planned, should not be able to train people, at least to some extent, to think for themselves, to sift truth from falsehood, to withstand the pressure of propaganda, whether commercial or political, and to realize that the integrity of human relationships is too sacred and too important to be broken at the behest of any mischief-monger, however powerful. This *can* be done through our schools and our adult centres—only we have not yet started thinking about it seriously! There is no reason, again, why with a well-meaning and progressive National Government at the helm of affairs, these dread Goliaths should not be made to do the work of David, why (in other words) the School, the Radio, the Cinema, the Theatre and the Press should not be regarded as special agencies to enrich the life of the people and improve their artistic, intellectual, social and moral standards. This *does* not call for regimentation or denial of freedom or the assumption of totalitarian powers but it does call for vision and imagination and lively awareness of the issues involved and their dynamic inter-connection with one another. Unless we appreciate the underlying unity of objectives that should inspire them all and understand how they react on the minds and emotions, we shall continue to watch helplessly the foolish and wasteful process of the good done by one agency being undone by others! We cannot provide

any effective education for millions of our people or bring about any great and abiding changes in their intellectual and emotional attitudes unless all the influences pouring in upon them are intelligently harmonized and coordinated. If we wish to produce quick results—and surely we have no time to waste and no occasion for leisurely complacency—Government must adopt a bold and far-reaching policy to deal with this situation and mobilize and encourage the best talent in the country for retrieving the films, the radio, the theatre and the press from the dull inanity or worse that characterizes them in a large measure at present and infusing a new sense of mission and a life-giving quality in them. I refuse to believe that we lack the necessary talent or the desire for social service. What is necessary is to relax the stranglehold of narrow, vested commercial interests or of a stereotyped approach on them and visualize them primarily as agencies of mass education, and not as money-making devices for profiteers without a social conscience.

THE RECENT TRAGEDY

I have so far dealt with only one aspect of the great change which has come upon us in recent years—the attainment of freedom—and some of its implications for Adult Education. If that were all, the picture would be one only of optimism and hope—a great and ancient people coming into their own after a hundred years of political struggle with the future lying invitingly open before them, to mould nearer to their heart's desire. But that is not all. This dawn of freedom was marred by a tragic orgy of murder and loot and destruction, by disgraceful acts of inhumanity in which members of all communities were involved. Luckily, the policy adopted by our secular State was able to quench the flames and things have improved to a reasonable extent. It is the duty of all honest patriots and all intelligent educationists to ponder over the causes which brought about this alarming state of affairs and to strive with all their power and resources to ensure that

such waves of madness are not allowed to jeopardize the precious fruits of our freedom. If we try to analyse the situation critically and dispassionately we shall find that, just as freedom did not descend upon us unexpectedly one fine morning, like manna from Heaven, this communal frenzy was not a sudden burst-up either. It is the result of a long series of contributory causes. For many years, the press, the platform, the political wranglers, the upholders of the self above the community and of the class and the community above the nation were allowed to play havoc with the happiness of the people and to embitter the relations amongst the various classes and communities living in the country. I am not concerned here with purely political issues or the assessment of responsibility for the crimes that were committed. To me, as an educationist, the significant fact is that they *have* been committed and they have produced a pathological situation which has left a deep scar on the spirit of millions of our fellowmen and women. Many of them have lost their true perspective and relaxed their grip on those values of peace, charity and humanity on which India—including her good citizens of *all* faiths—have prided themselves and, as a result of this moral tragedy, the entire future of the country has been endangered.

THE LAST WAR

Another factor which has aggravated the situation and which must be duly considered by our educationists as well as statesmen is the repercussion of history's most bloody and inhuman war on the peoples of the world, including our own. Men cannot possibly dodge the nemesis of their misdeeds and, sooner or later, their sins must come home to roost. A world that allows itself to drift into such a war, that utilizes the great ingenuity and resources of the human mind to devise new forms of tortuous death and destruction for soldiers and civilians alike, that spends billions on propaganda for war, that exalts violence into a creed and justifies the Atom Bomb—a

world guilty of all these follies and crimes—does not recover normalcy as soon as actual fighting is over. The millions of people who have taken part in war directly or indirectly, who have experienced and perpetrated bombing and inflicted tortures on human beings as a normal part of their duty are naturally apt to value life—their own and others'—rather lightly. After all that they have gone through, we cannot always expect them to show due respect for civil law and order or to react properly to suffering and sorrow inflicted on their fellowmen and women. They are, on the other hand, apt to turn violent at any provocation even in peacetime. This is no doubt a world problem, as complacent war-mongers are now realizing to their cost, but it is also a difficult problem for us in India. In planning our Adult Education, we must pay special attention to one large and important group—*refugees*, who have gone through frightful sufferings and many of whom have become soured and embittered in consequence. Any programme, which ignores this large element of the population and fails to provide for its re-education and the healing of its psychological wounds, will remain defective and incomplete.

URGENT TASK OF RE-EDUCATION

The most urgent task of Adult Education today, therefore, is not teaching people to read and write or to add to their knowledge or even to improve their general efficiency—important as all those objectives are—but to concentrate on their *social and moral re-education*, to rekindle reverence for life, which all great religions have taught, and to reassert the primacy of those moral and spiritual values which ultimately give meaning to life. It would be dangerous to underrate the impact of the recent happenings on the minds of the millions of refugees and others who have suffered and inflicted sufferings on their fellowmen. In the vicious cycle of communal excesses, revenge and counter-revenge, that was set up on both sides of the border, only a minority was able to retain its balance, sanity and sense of fairness. I have been

shocked and horrified to see how the bitter experience of pain and suffering—and sometimes only their reports, exaggerated and otherwise!—which newspapers have not hesitated to play up have changed normally decent and kindly persons into unreasonable fanatics and obsessed monomaniacs. There must be tens of thousands of persons who participated actively in the mad orgy of murder and destruction. That is bad enough but it *can* be put down, if necessary by ruthless force; no civilized State can suffer its anti-social elements to disrupt peace and order indefinitely. But what is infinitely more dangerous is the fact that millions of persons, of different communities, were content to acquiesce in the inhuman excesses committed by their own members while condemning them, with a great show of righteous indignation, in others! It is this insidious and gradual seeping of the poison into the heart and the mind which offers the biggest problem for Adult Education. No nation can survive for long, either physically or morally, if its conscience, its sense of right and wrong, its capacity for impartial judgment become atrophied. We have, therefore, to rebuild our shattered moral fabric through an intensive campaign of Adult Education and offer our whole-hearted support to all those forces and persons and groups who are fighting for peace, sanity and justice in social and political life.

ROLE OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE RENAISSANCE OF NATIONAL LIFE

The above considerations show that if Adult Education was important before, it is now literally a matter of life and death. But it is Adult Education interpreted in the broader, more comprehensive sense which includes political and civic, as well as moral, education. When we think of the tremendous problems created by the war and its aftermath, by our political freedom and by the division of the country, how pitifully inadequate seems to be the kind of Adult Education that we been planning and providing in our centres! What will it

avail our people even if *all* of them are able to read and write and manipulate the four simple rules skilfully? It will only provide so much more gullible and credulous material for the demagogues of the press and the platform! There will be no necessary elevation of standards or improvement of taste or enrichment of life; there will be no deepening of sympathy or understanding or social conscience. We must, therefore, learn to approach the problem from a different and more comprehensive angle and say to ourselves: We have to contribute to the development of people's appreciation, their critical faculties and their social sense that they may distinguish between the superior and the inferior in the realm of art, the true and false in the realm of knowledge and the good and bad in the realm of conduct. We cannot expect them to play their part worthily in building a cultured, socially just and prosperous democratic order unless their life is considerably improved in all these directions. These are ambitious objectives, no doubt, but to call them 'ambitious' is not to condemn them as impracticable but to accept the need for adopting equally 'ambitious' methods and techniques for their realization. And they are no more ambitious than things that have been achieved in many countries in the world where enrichment of the life of the masses has been accepted as the first charge on national conscience and national resources. What is, however, important for us to remember is that this raising of the material and cultural level, this admittance into the domain of the 'good life' is not possible through the drab, dreary and often literary dark 'adult centres' in which tired and ill-qualified workers labour to teach the mysteries of the alphabet to reluctant adults brought there under duress! If the adult education movement is to play its part in the renaissance of national life, these centres must become dynamic social centres, focussing the actual and potential cultural resources of the local community, making the members actively interested in their own improvement and providing an environment and an atmosphere in which that interest can be joyfully translated into co-operative and growing activity. Does that sound as asking for the moon? No, it is merely a

statement of what is not only *desirable* but also *possible* in all places where sincere, socially-minded workers are available and they have the benefit of intelligent and imaginative guidance. Can you think of any community of persons, however ignorant and oppressed by the burden of making a living, which will reject persistently all attempts made to bring a little light and joy and good fellowship into their life? Would they not welcome the chance to sit and smoke together in the evenings, to sing songs, to stage little plays and to hear stories, folk tales, *bhajans* and religious poetry? Why not then make a start in that way and provide, to begin with, just a pleasant meeting ground for villagers where they can gradually learn to contribute to their own amusement and relaxation? With this beginning, is it at all unlikely that some of those who assemble there may like to talk about their common problems and discuss their common needs and difficulties? This would provide an excellent starting point for the formation of 'discussion groups' and arranging what may eventually become 'courses' of talks and lectures on subjects of general interest and usefulness to the members. If the educational worker in charge of the centre has the gift of leadership and some understanding of adult psychology, he may be able gradually to make it into a living forum for the expression and exchange of ideas, for reading and discussing newspapers critically, for broadening their interest in current affairs. While the start may be modest in scope and the centre of interest may be immediate local problems, it is bound to flow over into affairs concerned with the district, the province, the country and even the whole world, thus becoming a school for citizenship. And not merely theoretical citizenship either. By undertaking common projects for common welfare, they will learn the lesson of co-operation and social give-and-take through practical experience and thus receive training in the qualities needed for the successful functioning of democracy. By quickening their interest in folk art and music and other forms of creative self-expression, not only will their lives be enriched and their appreciation deepened but it may even be possible to save them from falling helpless victims to the

purveyors of inferior commercialized art and music. We should also utilize at this stage—partly to win and retain their interest and partly to broaden their mental horizon—the various visual and auditory aids which science has placed at our disposal—pictures, charts, diagrams, films, radio, etc.—to which I have already made a reference. I am convinced that, if they are all mobilized in a rational and co-ordinated manner, they can exercise a most powerful formative influence on the minds of the public. Great is the influence of the printed and the spoken word which the press and the radio can put across to the literate as well as the illiterate but even deeper is the impression etched on the mind by films and film-scripts which appeal simultaneously to the eye, the ear and the imagination. Thus if Adult Education is broadened to mean Social Education, the education of the whole personality in all its manifold ramifications—as is the accepted connotation in all progressive countries—it can make a vital contribution to the salvation of the country and its bewildered people. But it is obviously a responsibility which neither the Education Department nor the Government machinery as a whole can take on by itself; it needs the closest and most cordial co-operation of all agencies, official and non-official, and of all individuals of goodwill and social sense who are interested in the welfare of India. There is so much work to be done and it is of such varied kinds that there is scope for everyone who cares to join the cavalcade of service—students, teachers, men of leisure, political workers, writers, labourers, craftsmen, professional men, everybody. But they—or, rather, the best of them—will join if there is inspired guidance and direction at the top which will make them feel that they are participating in a great national crusade. It is only on a wave of genuine enthusiasm and idealism that great objectives can be achieved. An apologetic, petty minded approach is not conducive to success in a big way. A great deal will, therefore, depend on how the great leaders of our national life tackle this problem and I can only hope and pray that they may be gifted with vision and imagination.

MAHATMA GANDHI—THE GREATEST ADULT EDUCATIONIST

No worker in this cause can withhold his sincere tribute of admiration from one who was perhaps the greatest worker of this century in the cause of Adult Education in India and, for that matter in the whole world—Mahatma Gandhi. With a magnificent courage and singleness of purpose, undaunted by the storm of fanaticism and hatred which whirled around him furiously, his voice, like that of the Prophets of old, called the straying multitude back to the path of honour and rectitude and love. Where men of lesser calibre were swept away by mass hysteria, he stood firm and courted abuse and unpopularity and misunderstanding by speaking the truth, when it was easy to win applause by swimming with the popular current of violence and hate. Gandhiji's post-prayer talks, couched in language which disdains the aid of rhetoric—and even of meticulous grammar!—will go down into history, like the Sermon on the Mount, both because of their high moral level and because they show a profound grasp of psychology in applying great ethical principles to practical everyday matters. From the *educational* point of view what Gandhiji did during the last few months of his life outweighs the manifold achievements of his entire life, unique as it was in its rich fulfilment. For, he was able to see not only the beam in the other's eye (which any half-blind fool can do!) but also the mote in his own (which needs the insight of the true seer) and he kept back a whole nation, comprising hundreds of millions of human beings, from sliding back into a moral deathtrap. I cannot describe his stand better than in the haunting and picturesque words of the great poet Iqbal:

Fast and furious blows the storm,
But calmly lights his lamp
The man of God, whom He has given
The attributes of a king.

Adult Education workers can do nothing better or more useful than carrying forward Gandhiji's message on whose implementation depends our moral survival as a nation.

Chapter XIV

EDUCATION FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

(Through Camps and Excursions)

WE have been talking for a long time about 'Education for Citizenship' but, till recently, many such discussions have had an air of unreality about them, as if they were matters of merely academic, rather than practical, interest. The country was not politically free and, while I do not wish to ascribe everything to that fact, as is currently fashionable, it is obviously extremely difficult to do certain types of important social work with enthusiasm under conditions of political subjection. One has to face so many contradictions between the demands of the objective situation, as interpreted by Government—which has all the authority and the resources—and the ideals and objectives which should inspire such work. For instance, creative citizenship implies co-operation for worthy causes, capacity for critical thought, freedom to place one's point of view reasonably and without fear before one's fellows and readiness to subordinate personal advantage to claims of group welfare. In the unnatural conditions created by a foreign Government, the critical mind is apt to be frowned upon, freedom of expression to be discouraged and the desire for personal advancement to take the place of a dynamic social sense. So we can see why, in spite of much exhortation and goody-goody talk by teachers, politicians and other long-winded reformers of society, and a certain amount of useful practical work done by some schools in this field, 'education for citizenship' did not become a dynamic element in our pattern of education. Things have now changed and what may have appeared a few years earlier as impossible or as a somewhat unnecessary intellectual luxury—depending on the temperament of the individual assessing the situation—is today a matter of urgent priority. We cannot sustain or

consolidate the freedom that we have won or put into it the socio-economic content which alone can give it real significance, unless we can train our present and future citizens to appreciate and discharge their new and exacting duties properly. They are of different kinds and not all can be compassed within the scope of civic training. But there can be no doubt that education for citizenship *does* include many of the most important of these duties. And if our schools fail to provide the atmosphere and the activities that inculcate proper civic values and attitudes, education will remain superficial and futile, unable to make any deep impression on life.

I do not, however, propose to discuss here the general problem of training for citizenship but only to elucidate the special part that school camps and excursions can play in achieving the ends in view. Before taking up this specific issue, however, it is necessary to indicate briefly what, to my mind, are the general objectives for which camps, etc. can be utilized as means. I consider a person to be a good citizen if he can wisely and decently balance the claims of the self and the group to which he belongs and adjust them in a reasonable and amicable manner. Let me illustrate. He wants to earn money; he is anxious to look after the welfare of his family and, when travelling, he wishes to get to his destination quickly. I have taken, somewhat at random, these three examples of *personal* ends or desires which are good in themselves. But, in trying to achieve them, he has to work in a social context and to come into contact with his fellow-men and women in a variety of ways and they are affected directly or indirectly by his activities. Now, what is it that distinguishes the good citizen from the bad citizen in the pursuit of these activities? For the sake of clarity, let me indicate very baldly the nature of the difference. The good citizen may well try to make money but in doing so he will avoid profiteering, black-marketing and other underhand ways of business because he knows that all these are likely to inflict loss or damage on others, even if he himself escapes unscathed. The bad citizen will have no scruples and make no distinction between good means and bad means. He wants

money and wants it quickly and, if in that process, he has to trample on others who are weaker or less intelligent or more honest, he would not mind. Again, the good citizen will certainly do his best to serve the interests of his family but he will take care to avoid being unfair to others in doing so. Jobbery, nepotism, favouritism—and how much of that still persists in our country!—will appear to him as both unworthy and undesirable in the larger interest of the community. On the other hand, to the bad citizen, these will be welcome allies in the attainment of his ambition. In the third example, the good citizen will not break the queue and thrust other people aside to get on a bus out of turn but respect the law himself and help and expect others to do the same. The bad citizen—and there are quite a few about!—will look upon the queue system as a confounded nuisance and will always endeavour to break it if he can do so with impunity or carry it off with a bluff. What does this boil down to? Certain old, simple but basic moral and ethical principles: ends do not justify means; the claims of the self should not automatically claim preference over those of others; one should do unto others as one would expect others to do unto oneself.

In addition to these conditions, good citizenship also demands efficiency and willingness to work on the part of every citizen. What I want to stress particularly in this connection is the need for cultivating in every man and woman, every boy and girl, the willing determination to undertake useful productive work—which may be mental or manual—so that he may not be a burden or a parasite on others but may render some form of service to society in return for the advantages which he receives (or should receive!) from it. Moreover, it is not work done *anyhow* that is important but work done with efficiency, integrity and with all the ability and energy of which one may be capable. Work done in a half-hearted, haphazard or careless manner is a social crime and has a demoralizing influence on the individual. Now, *training for citizenship* means the teaching of proper methods of work and discipline and the education of the emotions which will not only result in the acceptance of these principles as *right* but

transform them into permanent habitudes and dynamic motives of conduct.

What can schools do through camps and excursions to cultivate some of these qualities of good citizenship? It would obviously be wrong to claim that these camps can, by themselves, become self-sufficient schools of citizenship but I do hold that, if *they are properly organized*—and this is an essential condition—they can contribute a great deal to this objective. Let me enumerate a few of the educative opportunities and chances that they offer. In the first place when children and teachers live together in the freer and more informal atmosphere of a camp, they establish a new quality of social relationship and begin to understand one another better. In the class room, there is usually a stiffness and a sense of distance between the teacher and his pupils—though a few gifted teachers are able to overcome it by the magic of their personality—which restricts the normal enriching effects of social contact. Similarly, the children in class are governed by a somewhat artificial code of discipline and their personal relationships are hampered by the methods of work usually adopted. The camp, on the other hand, provides a natural milieu for developing that sense of comradeship which results from free group activity in work and play. It is like a small self-governing community which the children are responsible for organizing and for the proper conduct of which they must learn to divide the work amongst themselves intelligently, to carry out their duties in a disciplined manner and to obey their freely chosen leaders. Thus, a capacity for the division and integration of functions, cooperation in group projects, discipline and leadership—which are essential for good citizenship—are all bye-products of camp life. Again, in that free atmosphere of give-and-take, personal adjustments have constantly to be made to meet the practical demands of the situation. This process knocks down corners and rounds off angularities. Thus, in a camp, children will not easily put up with snobbery or laziness or deliberate inefficiency. They begin to see the direct relationship between actions and their consequences because it is immediate and is actually realized

and felt not only by the individual but by the whole community. Thus, if a child or a group responsible for collecting firewood will not do so, there will be no breakfast or lunch; if the tents are not carefully pitched and the necessary precautions taken, a strong wind will bring them down and an unexpected rain find its way to the beddings! It is a great educational advantage to have somewhat primitive conditions of living in the camp so that the campers may learn initiative and self-reliance and be able to improvise things to meet unexpected situations. Ordinary schools, working along traditional lines, often make children dependent, helpless and lacking in resource. A camp provides a healthy corrective and those who participate frequently in good camps are less likely, in later life, to become mere robots carrying out passively instructions given by someone in authority and feeling lost like sheep if the barking voice or the guiding staff of the shepherd ceases to function! There is a greater chance of their becoming active and resourceful citizens, able to assume responsibility and take the initiative when the situation demands it. They will also acquire a healthy respect for rules—which, in camps, they would have framed themselves or, at least, accepted spontaneously—and will not be inclined to break them lightly because they come in the way of their momentary whim or pleasure. They will develop a strong corporate feeling and learn the useful lesson that the individual should be prepared to subordinate his personal interest to the good of the group when necessary.

Let me re-stress one point to which I have already referred in passing. It would be wrong to imagine—and I am far from suggesting it—that a camp is a kind of magical cave from which anyone would come out transformed. No great and abiding psychological change can come about through time and labour-saving short-cuts and training for citizenship is no exception. For any effective results, it is not only necessary to reorient the entire work and spirit of the school but also to try and bring about healthy changes in our adult social practices and traditions. When school and society face in opposite or different directions, the child becomes confused or

unresponsive. If there is discipline in school but indiscipline outside—e.g. adults crash through queues and throw their rubbish (including banana skins and *pan*-coloured spit!) on the pavements and the streets and commit vandalism on public property—and ordinary laws of civic decency are set aside, how can the school hope to succeed against the overwhelming pressure of a de-educative situation? The other limitation on the effectiveness of camps is an internal one—namely, whether the camp is or is not organized on sound educational lines. I need not discuss here the details of this question but might well indicate what may be regarded as basic principles underlying good camp organization.

Persons who organize a camp should have a good understanding of adolescent psychology and be able to establish sincere and friendly relations with the campers. They should have faith in youth and should be prepared to delegate responsibility to them and give them freedom to work it out and make their own mistakes if necessary. The programme of the camp should be formulated mainly by the campers themselves, care being taken to see that it is elastic and varied so as to permit students of different talents and abilities to find some opportunity or field for self-expression. That is why I would favour the idea of different *types* of camps being organized for different groups of young persons—camps for healthy relaxation and 'nature study' in a natural setting; camps for scout training; camps for labour social service; special camps like the N. C. C. or A. C. C. camps or I. V. S. P. (International Voluntary Service for Peace) camps in which groups of young men and women of different nationalities work together for weeks or months in different countries trying to reconstruct war-damaged or flood-torn or disease-infected villages, building school-houses or roads or bridges or hospitals or doing other forms of practically useful manual labour. I am not suggesting that one camp cannot combine more than one of these types but it is good to keep in mind that young people can be brought together in a comradeship of life and work in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. Remember, however, that the great secret of a

successful and joyous camp lies in giving every individual participant a sense of personal worthfulness in a social context—in simpler words, everyone must be able to feel that he is doing some useful work which is necessary for, and appreciated by, his fellows. Further, it should appeal to their sense of romance and adventure and their *wanderlust* so that they may express their exuberant energy in healthy ways and this depends largely on the proper choice of the venue and the activities. A balanced, creative individual, with many interests and occupations—such as can develop through camping—is not only personally happy but is also a social asset because he does not suffer from that sense of grievance or frustration which is one of the most fruitful causes of social unrest and anti-social conduct.

It may be of interest to point out that Education Departments are becoming increasingly keen on developing the idea of camping both amongst teachers and students. The Central Government project of Labour and Social Service Camps, which are being organized on a large scale in different parts of the country, are well known. Another interesting idea has been developed in Bombay. For the last few years, a portion of the old Government House estate at Mahableshwar has been set aside for camping by students as well as for Teachers' Camps and Teachers' Homes and every year camps are actually organized there. The Education Department is trying to select *at least* one camping centre in *each* District, located in a pleasant and healthy place, where school children may have their camps not only during holidays and vacations but also during term time when possible. The necessary facilities have been provided for the purpose so that, under the guidance of enthusiastic teachers, students may avail themselves increasingly of this new educational amenity. The teachers would do well to remember that these camps can become vital centres of civic education and, if they are guided with sympathy and intelligence, the thousands of students who will pass through them every year may emerge with valuable qualities of industry, discipline, cooperation and leadership.

Chapter XV

HUMANIZING EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

THE "New Education" that we are anxious to usher into our schools requires a new approach not only on the part of the teachers but also on the part of Head Masters, Inspectors and all other educational administrators. 'Administration' in India has developed certain fixed habits of mind and stereotypes of action which has slowed down the speed and efficiency of our work in all departments of national life. This would be undesirable anywhere but is specially so in the field of education which does not lend itself to the bureaucratic approach. In the new set-up of things in free India, which has to build up new traditions, it is particularly essential that we should *humanize* our administration as quickly as possible. I am perhaps more keenly conscious of this need than some other fellow 'administrators', because I happened to take up this work with a somewhat different type of educational experience as my background. I spent a good many years of my life as a teacher in a University and a Training College and it was comparatively later that, somewhat unexpectedly, I found myself engaged in administrative work. This round-about approach has proved to be in some ways an advantage. Having dealt with individuals and with ideas for many years, I have failed to acquire that unquestioning respect for red-tape and files and the wheels-within-wheels of the administrative machinery with which the bureaucratic administrator is often apt to become irresistibly imbued. I have even rashly come to believe that the world would not come to a stop if we saw less of files and reports and circulars and more of teachers and children and actual field work. There is so much of correspondence and noting and 'file disposal' in Education Departments that the individual child, whom the New Education has tried to place in the centre of the picture, is apt to

become obscured—a somewhat vague and remote entity—in this accumulation of irrelevant material. And not only the child, but the human and cultural problems, with which the educationist is supposed to deal, and methods, curricula, creative ideas and experiments with which he should be primarily concerned are apt to be buried under ‘files’. Hence my plea, in the name of New Education, for a new spirit in administration which will ‘humanize’ the relationship between children and teachers and teachers and educational administrators. I use the term ‘humanize’ for what I have in mind, because I cannot think of any better description for the idea that, at all stages of educational work and in all its aspects, the approach should be essentially *human*—man to man, individual to individual and not file to file, report to report, superior officer to inferior employee! This is not a minor issue but a major problem, because it involves a reorientation in the whole outlook of teachers, inspecting officers and administrators. There is much less of the bureaucratic and ‘red-tapish’ mentality of this kind, say, in Great Britain than in India. The Inspector in England or Scotland is more of a friendly liaison officer between the Department and the field workers, a mediator linking up scattered educational experiences and experiments, than is the case in our country. I suggest that it is not a mere coincidence that the permeation of the spirit of New Education in many English schools synchronizes with the new attitude of inspecting officers towards teachers and their work. Is such a change easy? No, nor is anything *really* worth doing ever easy! So long as the great disparity between the social and financial status of ordinary school teachers and the higher Inspecting Officers persists, it is difficult to believe that they will be able to meet on terms of social or even intellectual equality. That is why the efforts made from time to time to raise the pay and prospects of teachers are to be welcomed as an attempt to look at the teaching profession realistically. In the past, there has been a tendency to look upon them through a sentimental haze, in which teachers appear either as some sort of inferior social servants or as belonging to an abnormal moral plane where the question of

material prospects does not seem to matter to them at all! Again, there is imperative need for teachers to establish normal, friendly and beneficial contacts with the parents and the public so that they become active, efficient, respected and helpful members of the community. This will be not only in their own interest as individuals but will also help to give education its proper place in the social economy. Unless teachers assume a dynamic role in the life of the community, education will not be looked upon by the people as an integral and significant factor in maintaining and improving the quality of social life. This can only come about, however, when the *whole* organization of education is inspired by a more generous and comprehensive vision than has been the case in the past and it is taken to be concerned not merely with instruction, in the ordinary sense of the word, but with promoting all those intellectual, cultural and recreational activities which enrich the meaning of life. I would venture to plead for transforming our Education Departments into something in the nature of *Ministries of Education and Culture* responsible for education of all types and at all stages, initiating healthy movements, encouraging voluntary effort and utilizing all the resources of the modern mass media for raising the standards of cultural life in the country. Since the attainment of freedom, there is evidence of the dawning of such a realisation and Education Ministries are becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that the promotion of Art and Culture are as much a part of their responsibility as the provision of education for children and adolescents in schools and colleges. It is to be hoped that, with improved finances, this trend will become stronger and Education will be recognized as an invaluable ally of the State in all such worthy and worthwhile purposes.

There is a rather significant difference between the work of the teacher and that of many other technical and professional workers which we would do well to bear in mind. The performance of an engineer, a scientist or a craftsman can be tested with a reasonable degree of confidence and, if he has shirked his work or done it in a slipshod manner, there is a good chance of detecting the lapse immediately. But the finest

results of education are intangible ones and they do not lend themselves to such objective testing. The integrity of a child's attitude to work, his social sensitiveness, his awareness of moral values, his capacity for leadership and disciplined effort—these cannot be weighed on any mechanical scale. You cannot, therefore, possibly ensure that teachers will give the best of themselves to their children except by creating a spirit and atmosphere of comradeship which may evoke all that is really worthwhile in them. Under any authoritarian regime, where the basis of relationship is fear of one sort or another, it is often possible to get certain routine things done efficiently. But, under such conditions, it is impossible to bring into true rapport the best elements in the personality of the teacher with those in the child's and thus education loses its greatest formative influence. I know that many administrators think—and in that term I include the headmasters also!—that the proper way to get work out of, at least, a majority of the teachers is by playing the martinet, like a Havaladar supervising the drill of recruits! But I am convinced that they are wrong. They have not tried the other way which is not the soft way but an exacting way, calling for great tact and wisdom and understanding. Any fool of a teacher—if I may be pardoned that phrase—can cow down a class of children into mechanical discipline; it takes a teacher of imagination and sympathetic insight to bring up children in an atmosphere of well-ordered self-discipline. Similarly, any fool of a headmaster—if he will forgive me that phrase—who suffers from an inferiority complex can, metaphorically speaking, wield the 'big stick' over his staff and make them carry out orders. But it takes a gifted and a humane headmaster, who is sure of himself and consequently able to respect the individuality of others, to treat his teachers on a footing of human equality and yet retain the position of educational leadership. May I share with you what I have come to regard as an acid test of a man's real quality? A truly great man—that is, a person with a big heart and mind—effortlessly raises up all those with whom he comes into contact; he makes them aware of their possibilities for goodness and greatness. The

small man, however high his worldly position, tries to belittle others in order to feel secure and self-complacent. To my mind, a good Head Master is one who can inspire and enthuse his colleagues without dominating over them like a harsh task-master. I would advise the Head Masters to try and bring about a total revolution in the relationship which exists between them and their teachers and place it on a footing of human equality. I do not mean to suggest that there are *no* schools where such relationship exists—in fact, it is precisely because I have seen such schools that I can confidently commend this good relationship. I have seen schools where Head Masters treat their teachers as friends and comrades, where they attribute all that is good to them and disclaim any credit for themselves, where they go out of their way to share in their personal troubles, anxieties and problems and would not rest till they have done all they can to help them. . . . And I have seen schools where the Head Master has about as much concern for his staff as the bad foreman in a factory has for the labourers working under him. Perhaps it will not be unfair to say that this type is in the majority. If we are to set our house right and to lay the foundations of a new educational order, we will have to change this state of affairs and make a bold bid to win their confidence, their goodwill and their whole-hearted cooperation. I ask for this human miracle not only in the interests of teachers and Head Masters, but because this involves a basic change of outlook which may transform the entire educational scene. At present the administrators and inspecting officers as well as Committees of Management often play the ‘big boss’ over Head Masters denying them the courtesy and respect which is their due; the Head Masters in their turn ‘take it out’ of the teachers and the teachers ultimately revenge themselves, consciously or unconsciously, on their children! And since the children cannot hit back, they often develop ugly complexes which create problems for teachers in schools and the parents at home and later when they grow up, for society as a whole. For, they too must perpetuate, when they can, this sorry authoritarian tradition to which they had been

subjected in their childhood and youth. Truly a vicious circle, this! I plead for the replacement of this authoritarian cycle by a humanized and democratic administration. Since I am referring for the moment to the Head Masters, I need not discuss what others can do about it but would appeal to them to break this vicious circle and throw open their hearts and minds to this revolutionary change. I am convinced that the change will be truly revolutionary. There are more things and more possibilities in the heart of man and in his creatively released individuality than in earth and heaven put together, and if we only knew the art of evoking these possibilities in our teachers and they knew the art of doing so in their children, what is there that could not be achieved? This is neither an idle dream nor an impossible claim. In hundreds of good schools all over the world where the springs of creative energy and human decency have been released through love and sympathy and comradeship—guided of course by intelligence—the results have been truly amazing. In the fields of knowledge, science, social service, art, music and self-expression generally, children have done things which the orthodox routine-bound teacher would have regarded as impossible. I would ask Head Masters not to generalize about the possibility of what can be done on the basis of their past experience because that was overcast by the sense of futility which obsesses all activities carried on in an atmosphere of political and mental slavery. Get rid of the paralysing idea that in this country 'nothing can be done'. If we could attain the political freedom of four hundred million people through an almost bloodless revolution, is there any reason in the nature of things why we cannot build a better educational edifice? It is, no doubt, work of a different nature but surely no one will seriously contend that it is more difficult or ambitious! Remember that defeatism is one of the main causes of defeat and nothing succeeds like the determination to success. If we bring the same persistence and will-power and the same spirit of idealism and sacrifice to bear upon this task we can surely re-fashion our educational system satisfactorily.

I cannot survey here the whole field of education, but would

confine myself to pointing out briefly some of the prominent forces which determine our educational pattern, for it is in their setting that we have to organize our work. There are two forces that have been operating powerfully on education throughout the world during this century and, though their impact on India has been somewhat limited in the past, they must be taken into account in all schemes of educational reconstruction. On the one hand there has been a growing movement for the last fifty years which has stressed the ideas of freedom, individuality, self-expression and the release of children's creative impulses. This was in the nature of a protest against the rigid, repressive and stereotyped education which dominated all schools and, under the generic title of 'New Education' it developed rapidly and spread its influence in all countries—particularly after the first World War. A couple of decades later, when democracy had to face the totalitarian challenge and its claim to greater efficiency and success as a way of life, the *social* aspect of education was brought to the front. Democracy had to justify itself not only on ethical and moral grounds but also as a practicable and effective pattern of social and political organization and schools were confronted with the imperative problem of educating 'the social individual', that is, a person whose fully developed individuality will be responsive to the demands of freedom and, at the same time, properly integrated with the general pattern of community life, and who is both able and willing to discharge the responsibilities of good citizenship. The history of education in the western world in recent decades has been the story of the action and the reaction, the advance and retreat, the conflict and the synthesis of these two forces. I refer to it here in order to bring out the point that in India today we are feeling the impact of these two forces simultaneously and this gives our educational situation its special significance and poignancy. Our schools in the past have been dominated by limited objectives, rigid methods of teaching and discipline and by a narrow and formalized curriculum. They have sent out scholars whose minds are unawakened and personalities undeveloped, who have not experienced the thrill

of self-expression through free activity. They have generally relied on repressive methods of learning and discipline and have been dominated by that most immoral of all sentiments—Fear. Thus they have done incalculable damage to the nature of children and the possibility of their normal growth; the sooner they are transferred or swept aside the better. If our schools are to become genuine educational centres it is essential to breathe into them the true spirit of freedom, releasing their methods and curricula as well as objectives and purposes from bondage to wrong traditions.

That is, however, only one side of the picture. Under any circumstances and any socio-political set-up, schools should devote themselves to the free development of the students' powers and capacities. During the last two decades enlightened educational opinion and the better schools in India have been actually devoting considerable attention to this issue. But a new and assertive factor has recently entered into the situation as a result of the attainment of freedom by our country and the attempt that we are making to establish in it a secular and democratic State wedded to the ideal of social justice. To educate a people to be worthy of this great concept and this great responsibility is, in all conscience, a very difficult task. But when it is viewed against the background of the recent and the remote past, its difficulties stand out with disconcerting clarity. We have to train people in democratic ways and attitudes after centuries of autocratic rule, of which the last 150 years were a period of foreign domination. During this period, the foreign Government was not interested in cultivating in our people the qualities of the free men; all its various agencies, including education, were concerned generally with turning out a pliable and docile type who would accept the *status quo* unquestionably and work as a willing instrument of a superimposed system. It is true that the inscrutable laws and forces that operate in the minds of men produced, under this very regime, men and women who valued freedom above everything else and who hankered after it with a devotion that the true lover reserves for his beloved. But it is also true that the majority had tamely accepted

their subservient lot and developed anything but the qualities of courage, initiative, cooperation and sacrifice which are needed for the successful working of democratic institutions. Now that Freedom is upon us—sudden like the sunshine on a summer's morn—we find ourselves ill-equipped for it, intellectually as well as morally. Education has to step into this breach quickly and efficiently and, through schools and social education centres, build up a generation equal to this great task. It must struggle against the hangover of the past and replace a passive by a dynamic, and a selfish by a socially conscious, outlook. This is a task which has been attempted in other countries and it has taken many decades, sometimes centuries, and is still not complete—perhaps it will never be entirely complete! In our country and in this winged century of phenomenal speed, we have to adopt intensive and concentrated methods to achieve quicker results.

There is, however, another factor in our case which complicates our transition from political subjection to freedom and from a society based on status and hereditary privilege to one based on democracy and justice. This is the peculiarity of the circumstances in which the birth of our freedom has taken place—the partition of the country, the riots, the massacres and bloodshed, the uprooting of millions of persons from their moorings, both moral and geographical, and the many economic consequences of War like food shortage and inflation which have made life one long drawn-out trial for the common people. Under normal circumstances, the long cherished attainment of freedom would have released fine springs of creative and cooperative energy and the people would have risen up in all their newly-found and newly-tested strength to build their country into a great power. But under these circumstances, even the fruits of freedom tasted bitter to many people and, instead of the joy of success, they have been experiencing depression, cynicism and despair. Education has to take upon itself the exacting and onerous task of healing the many wounds of the spirit that these tragic events have inflicted, to re-link the loyalty of our minds and hearts to our cherished ideals, to re-kindle the hope of a better life

and to give tired and dispirited men and women the desire, the determination and the capacity to struggle for it. It has to fight against the communal and sectarian madness that was fanned into a flame by post-partition happenings; it has to counteract the provincial, regional and parochial separatism which has raised its ugly head and it has, above all, to inculcate the qualities of tolerance, charity, kindness on which respect for human life and human personality depends. If it fails to visualize its task in these terms—which means that we and thousands like us fail to do so—education will be foredoomed to futility.

I have no doubt many of us are anxious to improve the quality of teaching and training in our schools and to make them play a worthy role in the rebuilding of national life. For this purpose, we will have to do many things, which I cannot possibly enumerate here, but I would suggest that our Head Masters and Inspecting Officers do them within the context of the forces and the values to which I have referred. They should draw teachers into active fellowship, call them into frequent conference, place before them the facts as they see them and the values as they visualize them, ask for their comments and criticism and then say to them something like this:

“Friends, we are engaged in doing educational work at a very critical period in the history of our country and the history of the world. It is, no doubt, beset with great difficulties—including the economic difficulties and handicaps under which we have to labour—but it is also a great adventure: an adventure of the spirit fraught with infinite possibilities. Our country, harassed by many obstinate and heart-rending problems, and our world, obsessed with misery and war and destruction and the menace of the Atom Bomb, have no protection against these dangers and no hope against the onslaught of the forces of evil except what we can do through education in its widest sense—through our own feeble but sincere efforts, with our weak but unwavering hands—to restore the world to sanity and reason and the

joy of creative, peaceful work. This battle has to be fought in every home and every school and within the heart and soul of every growing child and youth. It has to be fought against the Devil who sits at his counter buying human souls with his dirty but unlimited coins—coins of fear and greed and prejudice and the lust for power and the love of pleasure. We must strive to make these coins appear worthless in the eyes of our children and youth so that when they grow up they will be able to distinguish between gold and tinsel, so that, when the testing time comes, their values will be right. They will have learnt to prefer co-operative effort to self-seeking competition, the joy of creative work to possessive happiness, the quality of charity to domination, the virtue of tolerance to fanaticism."

If we can make ourselves and our colleagues believe in the essential rightness of this attitude and this point of view, it will surely not solve all our problems but it will ensure that we will be seeking their solution in the right direction. We will have to read and discuss and think and try out new experiments—and how few of us, alas, do that! We will not only have to add to our knowledge but to reorient our lives in the light of these values and thus enrich our own personality which is, after all, the educator's most precious asset. Thus, taking our colleagues by the hand, as it were, as partners in a great human adventure, we may be able, with patience and courage and intelligence, to transform our schools into free and cooperative communities of youth where their individuality will not be repressed but released and where they will learn, through experience of fellowship, that individuality achieves its perfection *not* in isolation or exploitation of others but in service and cooperation for worthy ends. The road to that goal is long and arduous and uphill but the sooner we start moving towards it the better. Time moves ahead relentlessly and Nemesis does not wait. May it be given to our generation of teachers to set the caravan going on this pilgrimage in a spirit of comradeship!

PART THREE

THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

Chapter XVI

CHOICE OF A PROFESSION

NO ONE adopts a profession for one definite, single-minded reason. There is always a multiplicity of causes responsible for this crucial choice—personal inclination, economic circumstances, social pressure and very often, also the element of chance. If, for example, the opportunity to receive specialized training in education at an English University had not come my way at a particularly opportune moment, it is possible that I might have found myself drafted into some other line of activity. But, surely, when one finds an occupation to be innately congenial there must be something in the nature of the work itself which strikes a responsive echo in one's heart and mind. I found in educational work a sphere of activity which was undoubtedly congenial to my temperament and I should like to share with fellow-teachers an analysis of the reasons for this feeling of satisfaction.

Psychologically, people can be classed into various types. There are some who are interested primarily in ideas, some in overt, practical activity or achievement and some in their fellow-beings. The first category provides the world with its philosophers, scientists, research workers and intellectual cranks; the second is responsible for administrators, discoverers and busy-bodies; the third throws up social servants, teachers, political workers and other, more or less sufferable, bearers of the world's sorrows. I am inclined to think that I belong more to the third than the first or the second category and no work can challenge my powers to the full which does not offer some scope for social service. In choosing education as my life work, I was certainly influenced by the consideration that, in this field, I shall not be concerned primarily with routine files and figures or accounts—though I have since had my full share of them!—or problems in crime or attempts at legal quibbling. I shall have to deal, instead, with human

and social problems in a particularly fascinating and fruitful context—namely, the life of children and adolescents as it unfolds itself gradually under the impulse of a planned yet free educative environment and the directive influence of the teacher's personality. What can be more inspiring and thrilling, for anyone gifted with imaginative vision, than watching and guiding the groping steps by which a child, apparently helpless in body and mind to begin with, comes into the full possession of his physical and intellectual powers? What satisfaction can be greater than the feeling that one has intelligently and sympathetically helped the lisping prattler to become a fluent speaker or a mellow conversationalist, or quickened into being the latent artistic gifts and appreciation of a promising child or transformed a misdirected person into one sensitive to the differences between right and wrong, justice and injustice? Every true teacher repeats in his experience something of the story of Pygmalion, patiently hewing out of crude and unshaped stone a thing of beauty and proportion and balance and then quickening it into life. I say every *true* teacher, because, I know only too well that in this, as in other professions, there are slackers who practise this creative art with the vision of a frog and the mental alacrity of a buffalo! Such teachers can certainly get no joy out of their work. The gift of joy comes only to those who give the best of themselves to their children and then find their reward in enabling them to live fuller, richer and more decent lives.

I think there is another reason which must have attracted me to the educational profession. I am interested not only in human beings but also—though in a lesser degree, perhaps—in the world of ideas, in the study and evaluation of ideas and the advocacy of those which are creative, dynamic and life-giving. I believe that the world cannot make any progress unless there is not only a continuous transmission and evaluation of ideas embedded in our culture but also a critical readiness to receive new ideas. *This* also is the teachers' privilege—making the growing generation appreciative of the best that their culture has to offer and sensitive to the new

currents of thought that may be emerging. During the first World War, an Oxford professor was once challengingly asked by some self-complacent military dignitary: "What are *you* doing here in this University when all good and true Englishmen have staked their life for their country?" The Professor quietly replied: "I? Oh—nothing very much. I merely help to create the culture for the preservation of which you are presumably fighting." Without attempting to pitch our claim too high, I do feel that, in so far as we are true to our ideals and, in our personal life and work, distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy, the significant and the petty, we *are* contributing our little bit to the preservation and reconstruction of our culture and spiritual life. No doubt, from a narrow point of view, we are only concerned with the teaching of certain subjects to our pupils and looking after their everyday conduct and behaviour. But is that all? Can anyone of us remain indifferent to the great struggle going on around us—the struggle to bring about conditions of living in which our educational ideals can be realized, the struggle for safeguarding values which have been cherished as sacred by the best minds of all the ages: values of social justice, of tolerance, of freedom, of the liberty of conscience and of respect for human individuality? If these things are really worth striving for, they demand our active allegiance not only as citizens but also as teachers. As citizens we have, of course, to take our share of the work and the responsibility involved in their preservation. But, as teachers, it is our special duty to orient our teaching and our personal lives towards these objectives so that the young men and women whom we send out into the world will be tolerant, broad-minded, humane, wedded to the cause of social justice and sufficiently intelligent to resist the poisonous appeal of racial, national and communal exclusiveness and antagonisms. If I did not believe that, as a teacher, I could make my little contribution to this great cause, I should not have chosen the teaching profession; for, after all, intrinsically it is not more important—possibly much less—to teach reading and writing than to teach any other skill like carpentry or cycling and

it is no more significant to teach little children facts of geography or mathematics than to add up a column of figures in an office or to indulge in petty commercial transactions. It is the deeper and the more far-reaching implications of the teacher's job which give it its special value and significance.

There is one other great advantage which the teaching profession offers: it gives one leisure, not so much during the session as during the annual vacation when one can cultivate one's special interests and hobbies and can, if one feels so disposed, make a welcome break with the ordinary routine of his life. How far teachers in India do actively take advantage of this opportunity—or can do so—is another matter. I do, however, feel very strongly that if we availed ourselves of this gift of leisure properly, it will make us not only better teachers but happier human beings. The financial handicaps from which teachers suffer often seem to make a mockery of these ideals as well as potential opportunities. But I have always felt that we are not in a position to make conditions with life and to say that, unless we are given a fine deal by society, we shall not do our best as teachers! It is bad enough to be worried and harassed by financial difficulties. It would be infinitely worse to add to it the feeling that we have also failed as craftsmen and social servants and that it is not only our pocket that is empty but also our conscience that is uneasy. Is it not, at least, possible that higher standards of integrity and efficiency may themselves contribute to raising the social and economic status of the teaching profession?

Chapter XVII

THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN SOCIETY

IN this age of science, which has brought men and groups of men into ever-increasing inter-dependence, intellectual and social contacts, cooperative effort and unity of purpose are essential for the successful functioning of every department of human activity. Otherwise the complex organization of modern life would develop friction and be thrown out of gear. This applies with special urgency to the great national service of education where no permanent improvements are possible without the conscious and intelligent 'pulling together' of teachers from the primary schools to the universities. Without multiplying contacts amongst them and of encouraging exchange of ideas and experiences which are necessary to quicken reform and promote professional solidarity, there is the danger that educational direction and guidance will come from outside and remain superficial instead of originating within the teaching profession and taking root in it. Success will increasingly depend in future on the teachers' own creative effort and their developing sufficient dynamic strength, professional efficiency and sensitiveness to transform what is largely a discontented 'service' into a self-directing, autonomous, national activity. What distinguishes a truly national and living system of education from one that has been mechanically superimposed from without is the fact that it takes its rise and direction from the resurgent forces of national life and is responsive to national needs and ideals, while the latter is a ready-made scheme designed to serve certain purposes formulated from the outside, as it were. A necessary corollary to this position is that, in a vital scheme of national education, the teacher as well as the community in general are keenly and intelligently interested in educational and related social issues and ventures and look upon

them as their own concern. From this point of view the present changing socio-political situation is a great challenge to the members of the teaching profession, for it is primarily their enlightened devotion and sense of duty which can bring about a renaissance not only in education but in the whole of national life.

I should like to place before you certain ideas and reflections which have occurred to me repeatedly about the position of the teaching profession in the life of a community. If we desire to measure the cultural worth of a people or appraise the values which find favour in any society, it would be a good criterion to ask: what is the social status and prestige of teachers in that community? Or we could phrase the question in more general terms and inquire: what is the position assigned to education and educational activities in the hierarchy of social interests and purposes? Have they been given a position of honour as the most significant and valuable of all national activities or are they treated as a kind of ornamental epiphenomenon or, worse still, as the Cinderella of the real business of living? I hold that a people's real greatness depends very largely on the value that they place on educational activities which sustain their intellectual and cultural life. Some persons may be inclined to disagree with this startling "*pedagogic*" standard and press the rival claim of wealth, or industry or political power or military strength or artistic achievement as more suitable criteria for the measurement of national greatness. This is a conflict of views which no thoughtful person—least of all teachers—can afford to ignore as irrelevant or unimportant, for, it reflects certain fundamental differences about what objectives and standards in life should be regarded as valuable and satisfactory. It depends ultimately on our interpretation of what we consider essential and inessential or comparatively more or less significant in life: the problem, in short, of *values* with which all education is pre-eminently concerned. In the light of their particular scheme of values, individuals as well as groups select certain purposes and ends which they consider to be particularly important and strive to attain them at the cost

of what they consider to be lesser interests. Thus, an individual or group which holds the acquisition of wealth or power to be the most important objective of its activity will labour in its behalf unwearingly and cheerfully sacrifice other things at its altar—personal comfort, peace of mind, even truth and justice. Another individual or group which finds the zest and meaning of life in the pursuit of Truth or Justice or Beauty will readily forego many of the tempting, worldly advantages for which others may be prepared to barter their souls! The whole history of mankind is a practical demonstration of peoples' reaction to this problem of values. The ancient Greeks owe their cultural immortality to their achievements in the domain of fine arts—their great creations of beauty—and their free, critical and philosophic thinking. The Romans are honoured in the history of human progress because of their contributions to Law and Administration. Neither of them, however, was successful in establishing anything like social and economic justice in their respective societies. The ancient Hindu culture, in the days of its glory, was rich in its heritage of ethical and philosophical values and discussion of problems of individual salvation. It could not, however, envisage a social system which rejected caste and class restrictions. Islam ushered in a powerful movement in favour of a society based on social democracy and human equality and aimed at removing distinctions of caste, creed and colour. During the last two hundred years, many western nations have pursued, with great singleness of purpose and with remarkable success, the twin objectives of commercial and political supremacy and have subordinated many other values and moulded many traits of their national character in conformity with the demands of this central aim. It is not necessary to multiply such instances, because in our own age and under our own eyes, we have seen the great metamorphosis of several nations like Germany, Italy, Russia and Turkey who have broken away violently with some of the good as well as the bad traditions of their past history because they set certain dominant, even aggressive national, racial or international objectives before them. It is true that there are

always some exceptional individuals and groups in every nation and country who prize their freedom of thought too highly to part with it at any threat of social or political persecution. But, generally speaking, we find certain dominant values operating in the life of the average man and woman in every country and shaping his thought and conduct and his conceptions of right and wrong. Whenever these values have tended to overstress the pursuit of personal or national gain in a selfish spirit, and consequently the worship of force—as is unfortunately the case in most of the nations today—it has resulted in endless conflicts, clashes and bloodshed and the establishment of regimes of tyranny. That is why we, as teachers, must part company with those who will encourage the mad pursuit of selfish gain at individual or collective level and must constantly re-affirm the primacy and significance of peaceful and cooperative cultural pursuits through which humanity has gained true self-expression and happiness.

Amongst such pursuits, by the common consent of most of the great thinkers and reformers of mankind, the spread of true knowledge and sound education has always occupied a place of honour. The reason for this view is that knowledge is the power which enables man to understand and control the forces of his environment; it is also the illumination through which he finds his way to a true discovery of the self and of God. Education is the instrument devised by the human race to preserve its cultural continuity and to exploit the heritage of the past for the enrichment of the future; it helps man to free himself from the forces of superstition, obscurantism and ignorance and gives him the power of conscious self-direction towards clearly envisaged goals. That is why there is hope and promise in the life of those nations who cherish education and the pursuit of knowledge as one of their supreme objectives, who are anxious to seek knowledge 'even though it may be in China'. But a nation that is indifferent to these and does not place them in the forefront of its activity is doomed to decay. By living for a time on its heritage of wealth or power, it may prosper for a time but there is no vitality, no sap of life in the depths of its

being. In the modern dynamic world, in particular, which requires constant and active mental adjustments and social reconstruction, the intellectual stagnation of a people spells their death—at least as a power that may count in the world. The history of our own country since its political and mental subjection to the British is an apt illustration of this historical law.

With this justification for my point of view let me revert to the question with which we started: what is the place assigned to education in our corporate life and what position do the teachers occupy in our present society? One reasonable method to estimate the situation would be to examine the budgetary position of education and the social and economic status of teachers. The education budget of our country reveals a painful story. The total expenditure on education in this vast and predominantly illiterate country is even now—in spite of the expansion that has taken place during the last ten years—less than 13% of our overall national budget, while the army budget accounts for about 30 per cent! Surely this is a reversal of values which should function under normal conditions. These abnormal conditions are not mainly of our making and we are, to some extent, subject to the general international situation. But those who work for the silent and unostentatious “victories of peace” on the constructive and creative front have a right to ask for better patronage. It may be an unpleasant surprise for many persons that the total amount of money spent, from all sources, on education in our country with a population of about 350 millions was, till some years ago, almost the same as that spent on the educational institutions of Greater London! If the teachers’ salaries are taken as an indication, the picture is no less gloomy, for the average primary school teacher often gets less pay—and, of course, ‘makes’ very much less—than the village Patwari or the constable or sometimes even a peon and it is not unusual to find schools in some provinces paying Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per month to graduate and trained teachers. (The recent increases in pay and dearness allowances have been more than offset by the increase in the cost of living.)

This is the price which we have set on the services which the teachers render to the community—services on which depends ultimately the continuity of the nation's culture and progress. In principle, it is of course absurd to measure the worth of an individual in terms of the money that he makes; but, in this commercial age when almost everything is measured in these terms, the teachers' economic position provides a sad commentary on our cultural standards.

The state of affairs has improved a little since the powerful advocacy of the need for raising the status of teachers by the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education—at least so far as its theoretical recognition is concerned. But it is not unusual even now to find State and private institutions pleading, in extenuation of teachers' low grades, the rigorous law of 'market prices'—as if the sale of cultural services were on a par with the sale, say, of carrots and radishes! The public in general may be inclined to feel self-complacent after throwing the blame for this poor deal on the authorities concerned. But one would like to ask them the inconvenient question: what of the status and prestige of the teachers in society, which is determined not so much by the financial situation of the Government as by public opinion? Do we try to improve their position by showing proper consideration for them in our social relations? In fairness we must admit that the public is more ready to pay homage to men and women of wealth and power and position, whatever their moral and human worth, than to those who are engaged in the educational service of the community. It is a curious but common observation that people show far more consideration to those who have the power to do them an injury and they would bow down to all sorts of officials from the Patwari and the constable upwards, while paying scant heed to those who are wedded, by the nature of their task, to quiet and constructive service. By paying a small fee to the school or a small salary to the teacher, the average parent imagines that he has more than repaid the incalculable debt of obligation under which a sincere and honest teacher places the whole of the community. Is it not strange that in European countries—which

we always look upon as essentially commercial and materialistic—teachers generally enjoy a social status which is in no way inferior to that of other high civil servants, while in India—which has always stressed cultural and spiritual values—teachers are socially looked down upon because of their economic status? This is all the more regrettable because, in the past, scholars and teachers in India have traditionally held a position of great respect, although they did not enjoy great wealth or the power which comes from building up professional organizations.

It is not difficult to account for, though it is impossible to justify, this decline in the social status of teachers. In the past education exercised a real hold on the allegiance and loyalty of the people because, in spite of its narrowness, it was regarded as closely allied with religion and national culture and the educators were looked upon as engaged in a spiritual activity of great significance. With the introduction of English education, however, this relationship was driven to the background and ultimately broken and education came to be regarded as just a means for securing entrance into government services. In consequence, teachers too have been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the business principle of 'maximum profit, minimum labour', thus reducing this rich, creative activity to the level of any ordinary trade and obscuring its uniqueness and its deeper spiritual implications. These and many other factors have combined to subtract from the prestige of education as well as teachers.

But this is not the whole story. In attempting to arrive at a fair appraisal of the existing situation, we as teachers cannot afford to ignore our share of the responsibility: that would be to forget the beam in our own eyes while looking at the mote in others! Dare we honestly affirm that our own low social status is due entirely to a lack of proper appreciation on the part of the State and the public and that our professional inefficiency and inadequate sense of duty have nothing to do with it? The process of general social and cultural disintegration, which has been corrupting our whole society for long, has also demoralized our own ranks. We

have lost sight of our true objectives and hence lack the inspiration and the sense of vocation without which no one can achieve great things. There are many in our ranks whose intellectual equipment, devotion and sense of duty leave much to be desired. *Most* of us, I am afraid, do not realize the nature of the exacting challenge which the present age makes to all men of intelligence and goodwill—*particularly* to teachers whose responsibility it is not only to produce better men and women through education but to work consciously for the evolution of a better social order. It is an age which, as I have discussed elsewhere, is rich in promise: Science has equipped men with undreamt of power which can, under proper social and ethical guidance, transform this sorry world of ours into a really decent place in which individuals and groups can realize their full potentialities. On the other hand, it is also an age in which ignorance, poverty, disease and all kinds of social and economic injustices embitter and poison the life of large masses of mankind, in which all the formidable powers of scientific technology are being used largely for exploitation, destruction and in suicidal conflicts. It denies, to the large majority, access to cultural riches whose enjoyment requires not only right education but also a certain amount of leisure and relief from the brute struggle for material existence. Thus it handicaps the efforts of the teacher at the outset and later undoes much of his uphill work by making it impossible for people to devote themselves to the pursuit of worthwhile ends and interests. Are we, as teachers, content to remain indifferent spectators of this great and epic struggle between the forces of justice and injustice, co-operation and exploitation, humanity and barbarism? Or, shall we throw our weight enthusiastically on the side of ideas and movements which attempt to bring about justice between man and man and create conditions in which individuality can be released for beneficent self-expression? This question is really a rhetorical question, for there is, in truth, *no* choice before teachers. Every teacher worth his salt must ally himself with the forces of justice and progress. That is the only way in which he can make himself felt as a

social and regenerative force. Let us not forget that teaching is a noble profession which counts amongst its members the greatest and noblest figures of human history, for *all* the great religious leaders and reformers of the ages—Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Christ, Mohammad, Gandhi—were teachers of mankind in the truest sense of the word. They analysed with integrity and courage, the values operative in the life of their people and placed before them the vision and the ideal of a better and higher life. What made them great was the fact that they threw themselves whole-heartedly and unreservedly into the service of their vision and, by losing themselves in it, they discovered superhuman powers in the depths of their own being. Teachers of our age, too, can work as the architects of a better future for the race if they follow their example, and try to achieve happiness, *not* by concentrating on petty and selfish interests but by serving some cause greater than themselves—the cause of building up a better type of human being and a better social order than that in which it has been their lot to live. Are our teachers prepared to accept this challenge and equip themselves for the great task? On their answer and the answer of their colleagues in other countries depends the future of human civilization and culture.

Chapter XVIII

A NEW IDEOLOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

THE more I see of educational work—good work and bad work—the more emphatically I feel that the quality of the teacher in an educational system is a more important factor than all the other educational factors put together—syllabus, text-books, equipment and buildings. If we cannot secure a teaching personnel that is keen and intelligent and has a high sense of duty and integrity, and if we cannot keep them reasonably satisfied and contented in their work, no educational scheme can have the slightest chance of success. That is why perhaps the most important scheme in the reconstruction of education in the country relates to the improvement of the qualifications, the status and the prospects of the teachers, which are, at present, so depressingly low. If the country is prepared to tolerate the existing conditions of teachers any longer, it has no right to expect either any improvement in the quality of education or any success in its scheme of educational expansion. As far back as 1937, when the Central Advisory Board of Education published its scheme of Post-War Educational Development, it laid down certain minima of pay and grades as well as qualifications for teachers to be recruited in future. The two are inevitably interconnected—if grades are not properly revised, a sufficient number of duly qualified candidates will simply *not* be forthcoming for the teaching profession.

That, however, is only the *first* condition to be secured—offering of attractive prospects to likely candidates. But, obviously, every person, who aspires to enter the teaching profession is not suited for it! It involves work of a peculiarly exacting nature for which certain social and moral qualities are, at least, as essential as academic attainments and intellectual capacity. The work of the training institutions,

therefore, begins before the intending teachers start their professional training—it includes the extremely important and difficult problem of *selection*. Making the technique of training effective is certainly necessary, but how far can good training go if the material is poor or unsuitable to begin with? So the first problem of the educationists responsible for organizing teachers' training in India is to devise an adequate and practicable method of selecting candidates, who are likely to make good as teachers. I cannot discuss the details of this question here but it seems quite clear that certain things will have to be done if the teaching profession is not to become the refuge of people rejected or found unfit for other professions. To facilitate selection, we will have to devise a system of maintaining fairly elaborate individual records of all students, who pass out of the Secondary and Senior Basic Schools. These records should give a clear and correct picture not only of the academic progress of the students but also of their social interests, their practical aptitudes, their hobbies, their qualities of discipline and leadership and their general attitude to work and to their fellow-students. It is out of such trends and tendencies that the texture of human personality is woven, and it will not avail an educationist much to know a boy's score in Mathematics or Language if he has no idea of his social sensitiveness or his sense of humour or his capacity for work in cooperation with others. This 'personality chart' of the candidate mapping out, as it were, his development for the entire period of his schooling, will be a good starting-point for assessment, provided, of course, the teachers have been trained to maintain these records intelligently and honestly. It will, then, be necessary to supplement them by intelligence and disposition tests specially designed to select promising teachers. I do not think any ready-made tests imported from outside would be quite suitable. It would be necessary to get good and experienced teachers trained as psychologists, so that, on the basis of personal experience as well as technical knowledge they may prepare sets of tests suitable for varying local conditions. But even this is not enough. Tests and records are neither infallible nor fool-proof;

and the final tests of capacity and personality is *action*, i.e. how does a candidate actually shape out in the class-room and in dealing with children as human beings? Is he or is he not able to bring those intangible gifts of personality—sympathy, tact, good humour, power of discipline—into play in the course of his work? This can only be revealed by the pragmatic test—the test of actual experience. I am, therefore, inclined to think that the Heads of training institutions—men chosen for their intelligence as well as integrity—should have the authority to weed out a small percentage of their students, who are found to be temperamentally incapable of making good as teachers. Perhaps, this may involve the risk of an occasional miscarriage of justice; perhaps, this may even involve some financial loss. But, surely, these are insignificant when compared with the alternative danger of inflicting on the teaching profession and therefore, on *generations* of children, a proportion of teachers who, for one reason or another, are not likely to succeed as educators.

How is this question of *selection* related to the *New Ideology* which should inspire the training of teachers? It would be quite useless to talk of any fruitful and creative ideology if we failed to make a right selection of the persons, who are to be trained for the teaching profession. A *majority* of the unfortunate members of the teaching profession have been drawn to it not by a sense of vocation but by sheer economic necessity. In an unorganized, selfish and competitive society, there are always large numbers of people who cannot find congenial work. They are, therefore, driven to take on any kind of work, which they can manage to secure, and thus, without exercising any choice, many of them find themselves enrolled as teachers—poorly paid and discontented! It would do no good to try and instil any imaginative ideology into *them*—unless, through a change in their total environment, their outlook and attitude could be transformed beyond recognition. But if, through proper selection and adequate remuneration, we are able to recruit a better quality of candidates, the soil would certainly be favourable for the cultivation and growth of the right educational ideology in

them. Such an ideology could not, indeed, grow in a month or a year, but will be a life-long process and the seeds of it will have to be sown while they are being educated in training schools and colleges. What can these institutions do in this direction?

Before answering this question we must recall to our minds what our Educational Plans are trying to achieve for only then we can visualize the role of teachers' training institutions in their proper perspective. It aims not merely at the expansion of the existing educational facilities on a scale never attempted before but also at giving a new bias and a new orientation to our education. Primary education is no longer to be a groping attempt at imparting literacy (which may be lost even more quickly than it has been acquired!) but, as envisaged in the Scheme of Basic Education, a means of relating the school closely and intelligently to productive work and crafts and the general socio-economic environment of the child. He is to be trained for *citizenship* through a well-planned curriculum and through work, rather than for passing a formal examination. Again, this education is not to be confined to a small percentage of the population but is to be universal, free and compulsory, and to spread over a period of 7 or 8 years. At the secondary stage, all the students will not be required to pass through the 'goose-step' of the uniform academic course and a mechanical examination but there will be a more broad-based system of multi-purpose schools which will embrace within their purview various vocational subjects also, utilized as effective media of education for students with practical aptitudes. Thus, this re-organized Secondary Education will, on the one hand, bring the school nearer to the realities of life—which does not consist entirely of officers and clerks and 'black-coated' professions but also includes such activities as farming, factory work, crafts and manual labour—and, on the other hand, make it more congenial for different types of students and draw out their characteristic talents more effectively. The scheme also envisages the tackling of the tremendous problem of Adult Education in a more intelligent and courageous manner than had been thought

possible in the past. A serious attempt is being made not only to liquidate illiteracy but to fight against the terrific weight of ignorance, apathy and wrong ways of living that cramp the life of the masses and defeat all attempts at social reform. In this field also it is the teachers who will have to play the leading part.

Let us confine ourselves here to these three aspects of education only, as the training institutions will be mainly preoccupied with teachers concerned with Basic, Secondary and Adult Education. Does this background point to any features of the 'New Ideology' which should inspire the training of our teachers? I think one can see it outlined as clearly as the evening sun sometimes outlines in silver the clouds behind which it is hidden. What should be the main features of this Ideology, if our training schools and teachers are to play their new role worthily? In the first place, they will have to visualize their task not as the schooling of a certain section of the people but as the education of the entire nation. The difference is not quantitative but qualitative—it transforms entirely the nature of the problem. If you are teaching children, who come mainly from certain special classes—e.g. the upper and middle classes who can afford to pay for the privilege—you have to address yourself, consciously or unconsciously to *their* needs, *their* problems, even *their* prejudices. The selection of the text-books, the choice of the syllabus and the curriculum, the organization of school activities, the inculcation of social habits and ideas are all powerfully—even if unwittingly—coloured by the social framework of your professional activity. But once education is seen to be a nation-wide process—covering boys and girls, men and women, old and young, poor and rich, urban and rural, those obsessed with leisure and those obsessed with work—it puts an entirely new complexion on the matter. Education ceases to be a sectional interest—it must become co-terminus with life. The field and the farm, the factory and the workshop, the craftsman and the mason, the scientist and the artist—in fact, all varieties of productive work that sustain the material and the cultural life of the community

are seen to be as truly a part of the rich store house from which the school is to draw its sustenance as the knowledge enshrined in the printed book. This has two rather significant implications. It means, in the first place, that a narrow and rigidly uniform system of education is obviously out of place under the circumstances, for millions of these children who have been given the gift of variety cannot, without grave risk, be put into *one* straight-jacket, however perfectly designed. The teacher will have to provide a more varied fare for his children in order to ensure for them a full and normal growth. Secondly, the teacher himself will be unequal to this new task unless he is helped out of the long entrenched and eminently 'respectable' academic tradition—a tradition that identified knowledge and education with book knowledge, acquired through the spoken or the printed word. In this 're-conditioning' of the teachers' minds—who, for many years to come, will be drawn from schools of the traditional type—the training institutions will have a very significant part to play. They cannot remain content with teaching their students certain nice-sounding 'principles' and 'methods' of school instruction or some 'tricks of the trade', which they might find useful in the class-room. As a matter of fact, my own private feeling is that we attach a little too much value to these methods and principles. They are useful in so far as they might help the new teacher to avoid glaring mistakes and pitfalls and save him from the risk of going against the laws of child psychology. But they are apt to remain somewhat vague and ill-defined. With their help he can steer his way only with diffidence and they can gain concreteness and reality only when the teacher has passed through the cleansing furnace of intelligent, self-critical experience. The training institutions, therefore, will do well to occupy themselves even more with the re-orientation of the teachers' outlook towards the basic problem of education—and the social problems out of which they take their rise—than with the traditional problems of methodology. Thus, the teachers should be made to realize, through discussion and study and actual contact with social institutions, if possible, the nature of the demands

which society is likely to make on the students whom they are to educate—demands regarding technical efficiency and competence as well as those connected with personal, social and moral qualities—and how far the schooling that they are actually receiving is calculated to equip them to meet these demands. Again, they should learn to appreciate, in a poignantly personal manner, that these students come from different strata of society and suffer from many and different kinds of deprivations, which affect in subtle but powerful ways their entire mental horizon and their attitudes. This not only postulates that they should adapt their methods of teaching to individual needs—to ‘temper the wind to the shorn lamb’, wherever necessary—but also requires that they should try and develop in all the students, through the various personal and impersonal means at their disposal, an ideology that will stand for social justice and fairplay and against social exclusiveness and unfair inequalities. For, are they not, after all, trying to educate a *whole* nation to live peacefully and decently rather than concerned with a dominating class? This is not an impossible or even an unduly ambitious expectation to entertain—experience of what has been achieved in such different countries as the U. S. A., the U. S. S. R. and Nazi Germany amply proves how powerfully educational agencies can mould the minds and feelings of entire peoples when they are inspired by some clearly focussed purpose. The training of the teachers—as, indeed, their entire earlier education at the school and the college—should, therefore, aim at quickening their social conscience both in respect of the children entrusted to their care and the larger community to which they belong. If they enter upon their work in this spirit and under the inspiration of this ideology, all their technical knowledge will be pressed into the service of a better and more humane education. Otherwise, in education—as in industry and politics—it has always been possible to use efficiency as an instrument for the furtherance of unworthy and anti-social ends.

We have also to consider the implications of the fact that Primary Education is to be craft-centred or, at least, correlated

with craft-work and Secondary Education to be given largely through multi-purpose High Schools. This new situation demands a new type of teachers—teachers who not only possess manual and technical skill but also an appreciation of the part that manual work plays in life. This requires an enrichment of the curriculum of training schools, a broadening of its base, so that *all* their trainees are equipped, in some measure, with one or other type of craft skill. It also implies that we should throw our net much wider and draw into these institutions and into the profession people belonging to different walks of life, who can bring practical experience of work to bear on what they are to do in schools. This would mean that the greatly expanded teaching profession of the future will not remain a water-tight compartment into which nothing flows from outside and from which only those 'lucky' captives escape, who can pass a competitive examination or secure a clerical job outside. In our secondary schools in particular, there should be opportunities for men with technical skill and experience, who have worked in factories or on farms or in other types of productive work, to join the staff for some time and make the school work more alive and practical. The training schools should be prepared to welcome this unorthodox type of teachers within their walls and provide short-term courses for their benefit also. This they would be able to do if their thinking is released from the narrow academic grooves in which it has been accustomed to move, and they can visualize these different types of teachers and different varieties of activities as integrated factors in the comprehensive process of education. It is, therefore, not a mere matter of providing some special 'refresher courses', but of cultivating a new vision and a new outlook on educational work.

The point that I am trying to urge about teachers can be illustrated, perhaps, more lucidly with reference to Adult Education. So far our training institutions have not bothered about the problem, which till recently was supposed to be the special province of faddists and visionaries. "How can the Education Department or any other agencies liquidate the

illiteracy of so many crores of people?" Now, however, educationists and administrators have realized not only the magnitude of the problem—doing so is not much of an achievement!—but also the fact that it is necessary to tackle it, that, in fact, there is no other way out: we must either educate the masses or perish. Now, who is going to do so? While we should try to mobilize all possible public and voluntary agencies for the purpose—and they have their place in this stupendous undertaking—we have to depend largely on our teaching personnel for the achievement of this objective. And teachers cannot do so unless two conditions are fulfilled. Firstly, there should be adequate remuneration for the additional work, which they are required to put in for Adult Education. With that condition, of course, the training institutions are not concerned. Secondly, the nature and urgency of the problem and the technique of dealing with it at different levels should be brought home to them. This is partly, at least, the job of the training schools and colleges which must be inspired by an imperative belief in the urgency of this work without which the attainment of social health is impossible. They must imbue the teachers with the desire and the capacity to fight against this overwhelming evil which is not, as I have mentioned already, a matter of teaching adults to read and write but a fight for eradicating ignorance, superstitions, wasteful methods of work and anti-social ways of living. Now, a teacher, who is only versed in book-lore and has no contact with or understanding of men and matters and does not know how his fellow-beings live and suffer and what their pressing problems are—such a teacher can never make a good Adult Education worker. Knowledge has a curious quality—it is not a fixed, immutable commodity with a ready-made face; it assumes as many faces, so to speak, as its recipients. Teaching a class of adults is altogether a different type of experience from teaching a class of children; it is an adventure the end of which may surprise you, because you may find yourself being educated through it just as much as the class you are teaching. Therefore, the teacher must adopt the attitude of a traveller exploring his way through a new

territory where he may meet, now a person gifted with a lively and inquisitive mind, now another suffering from an exasperating mental apathy. But towards them all he has to behave like a humble co-worker, who is anxious to fathom their minds and their needs and place his knowledge and help at their disposal. Here, obviously, the narrow academic mind will be at a disadvantage—he will neither be able to speak their language nor think their thoughts nor bring himself to their level in ordinary everyday life. The man with a fuller and richer experience, who has dealt with books as well as men and affairs, will be able to fit in better with groups of adults and convince them of his sincerity and suitability for his job. It is the business of our educationists and educational administrators to understand the significance of these new dimensions of the educational field and to allow for them in their planning.

Chapter XIX

SOME PROBLEMS IN THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

TEACHERS' Training Colleges are in rather a curious predicament in our country. On the one hand, the regulations laid down by the Departments of Public Instruction demand that all or most of the teachers employed in Government or aided schools must be trained and there is consequently an increasing number of candidates knocking for admission—often in vain!—at their gates. On the other hand, in the mind of the public and of educated people belonging to an older educational tradition when teachers did not receive any professional training, and sometimes even of the teachers themselves there is a lingering doubt whether this training is worthwhile, whether the one or two years which students are compelled to spend at these institutions are really well spent, and whether educational work has, as a whole, benefited and improved as a result of this professional training. I propose to discuss here this persistent problem which is always cropping up in different forms before those who have anything to do with the training of teachers—namely, whether our training colleges are really successful in their avowed objectives and whether these objectives, in themselves, are worthy of approval.

We are familiar with the usual charges that are levelled against the training colleges by all sorts of people—and not infrequently by the very teachers who have had the benefit (or otherwise!) of this training. An analysis of these will help to clarify the situation. One common complaint is that the training given is not related closely enough to the actual conditions of school work and when trained teachers pass out of their portals (often heaving a long sigh of relief!) they are not able to translate their educational theories and principles into practice. Their knowledge of theory and their school-

room practice remain confined in water-tight compartments, instead of mutually enriching and inter-penetrating each other. Soon, too soon, after being caught up in the grindstone of the school routine they fall into the traditional, uninspiring methods of teaching and thus fail to bring any fresh life and vitality into the schools. Very often the teachers themselves complain that all their knowledge of theory, laboriously imparted and laboriously acquired in colleges, has been 'useless' because they cannot, under existing school conditions, utilize it in a practical manner. The complaint takes a more general form when the question is asked: What have the training colleges contributed to the improvement of school education? How have they made it more effective or more joyous or more full of immediate meaning for the children? Have they succeeded in creating amongst their students a proper attitude towards their profession? Is it not a fact that the professional education of a large majority of teachers stops as soon as they leave the college? Instead of trying to equip themselves more adequately for their important vocation, are they not content to vegetate and fossilize, not caring to read even a single new book on the subjects that they teach or on the general problems of education? What justification, then, can one offer for these training colleges?

We cannot deny that there is a great deal of truth in these allegations and the training colleges must accept the greater part, though not the whole, of this blame. The divorce of theory from practice is one of the most serious defects of training college education and, unless it is removed, its effectiveness will continue to be very questionable indeed. The reason for this is not far to seek. There are very few colleges which have the right type—often any type—of 'Demonstration School' attached to them, where teachers might work out educational principles and methods for the benefit of their students. This fact has had a very undesirable repercussion all round. The training colleges do not get any substantial opportunity of putting their theories and methods into practice and their teaching consequently lacks that touch with life and reality which only successful,

practical experience can give. On the other hand, the work of the schools goes on along its traditional grooves, not enriched at all by the stimulating contact and the researches of the training college. But the worst sufferers in this unfortunate triangle are the teachers-in-training, who see no actual demonstration of schemes and methods which they generally study in English and American books, which naturally deal with them in the light of their own special conditions. Their entire pedagogical knowledge is thus vitiated by a gnawing sense of unreality and, not infrequently, they look upon all 'new' methods as so many impracticable fads. The result is that their ideas remain vague and they are unable to visualize them as directive forces in school instruction. What is worse, even their professors often lack that clarity of vision and self-confidence which can only come when they have had the chance to put their theories to the touchstone of practice and have found them workable. Practice and theory must both be visualized as growing entities—theory illuminating practice and ensuring its progressive improvement; practice constantly modifying, re-interpreting and strengthening theory, and checking its tendency to become mere airy persiflage. It is, therefore, essential that every training college should have under its direct control a properly equipped Demonstration School, conducted on experimental lines and working on methods and principles advocated in the lecture rooms. If students in training have personal, first-hand experience of these methods in actual use, if in the course of their teaching practice they have helped to run the school on these lines, there is a much greater likelihood of their acquiring an experimental attitude towards their work and of establishing, in later life, a fruitful interaction between their knowledge of theory and practice. Also, when they have once tested the joy of creative endeavour, they will be impelled to continue for themselves the process of their education and seek to add to their knowledge and technique.

In so far, however, as the conditions of work prevailing in schools are positively antagonistic to work on new lines, the responsibility lies not on the training colleges but on

the schools and their authorities—whether Managers, Head Masters or Departmental Officers. Even the most enthusiastic of teachers, with the keenest sense of duty, have their spirits damped when they meet discouraging conditions in the schools and find their colleagues and the authorities passively disapproving, if not actively ridiculing, all attempts at reform as useless fads. The only remedy for this situation is to organize the progressive educational forces in the country in such a way that they may derive strength and inspiration from their association with one another and fight the forces of reaction and indifference. In this work, too, the training colleges can and should play a useful part and some machinery should be devised which will enable them to keep in touch with their ex-students and to guide them in their work. In some western countries—for instance in Germany before the war—no teacher is certified as being a *pucca* teacher unless, after completing his training course, he puts in a few years of supervised and approved teaching in some well-organized school. During this period he remains in a kind of *status pupillari*, working under the guidance of some competent and experienced teacher of his school and receiving occasionally the benefit of supervision and inspection by the inspectors of the Ministry of Education and the professors of the training college in that locality. In certain States in America, teachers are not confirmed and given their annual increments unless they can show that they have been carrying on a certain minimum of professional studies and attending refresher courses and, in various ways, improving their professional efficiency. Such checks are very useful—especially when they are not made merely formal—and some scheme can be devised whereby the emphasis is laid not on complying with certain technical formalities but on securing conditions that will put a premium on experiment, on growth and development, on a continuous recreation by the teachers of their cultural interests and teaching ability. A training college should, therefore, be utilized to exercise general supervision over the schools situated in the neighbourhood, to encourage teachers, especially its own *alumni*, to improve school teaching and to conduct

educational experiments and, generally speaking, place its advice and resources at the disposal of all those who may require them. The schools of the area must learn to look up to it as a source of inspiration and a centre of educational research to which they can refer their special problems and difficulties for advice, as the well-organized industries of the west refer their special technical problems to their respective research institutes. This demands not only a progressive educational policy and outlook on the part of the training colleges but also a much closer contact and coordination between them and the work of the schools. Unless some vital and living contact like this is established between them and the different types of schools in their regions, their work will continue to wear an appearance of unreality. Given such a contact, it will not only have a beneficial reaction on the work of the schools but also provide for the training colleges a pragmatic test of their theories and ideas without which they are apt to remain very much in the air. Moreover, by trying to apply their ideas gradually to a large school system and not to one or two isolated, possibly specially favoured, schools they will demonstrate the general usefulness and the practicability of their theories and thus go a long way to break down the present attitude of scepticism towards their work. The kind of work done by Washburne, for example, in all the schools under him at Winnetka, could be attempted by any keen and progressive training college in all the schools of the locality associated with it in educational comradeship. Moreover, the methods and schemes of work which they develop after practical experience of conditions in all types of schools—large and small, rural and urban, rich and poor, progressive and backward—will be far more useful than the easy-chair theories with which they have to remain content at present as their permanent stock-in-trade. Unless we can, in some such manner, 'follow up' the work of the teachers and see how they are actually shaping out after they have been released from the somewhat artificial environment of the training colleges, we shall always be faced with the danger of their sliding back into easy and lazy ways, indulging in cheap

sneers against their new and more enthusiastic colleagues and using their experience, not for adding to their control and insight and for directing their experience into more creative channels, but as a clever device for shirking work and discouraging progressive change. The rather ambitious scheme of Extension work, which has been organized by the Central Government in cooperation with the Ford Foundation and the T.C.M. recently, represents an attempt to place Training Colleges just in this position of leadership. They have been given the necessary facilities of personnel and equipment for this purpose and have taken it upon themselves to supervise the work being done in their neighbouring secondary schools with the object of improving their educational efficiency.

On the side of work in theory also, training colleges have been subjected to conflicting criticisms. It has been pointed out that they teach too much of theory; that they teach too little of it; that their theoretical courses should be curtailed; that there are many important things that they should, but do not, teach! We can leave such criticisms to look after one another. But there is one serious and justifiable charge which challenges our attention. Our training colleges have been far too preoccupied with the technical aspect of their work at the expense of the *human* aspect. They have tended to stress method and teaching devices and skills to such an extent that students get no chance for the play of their critical intelligence on problems of aims and purposes and values. They have often 'missed the sight of the wood for the trees'. They have failed to visualize education as a social and cultural activity carried on within the pattern of a characteristic social and cultural life. The relation of the school to society and its living problems and issues have been obscured by concentrating short-sightedly on minor details and technical requirements. The shortness of time at the disposal of the colleges is possibly an explanation but not an excuse for this situation, because its unchallenged persistence indicates a wrong sense of values. In this respect, therefore, it is essential for the training colleges to revise their values and avoid the misfortune of the man in the cave who could see nothing of

the fascinating vista around him because his vision was bounded by the four walls of his prison. I am aware that there has been some change for the better in this regard but there is still an inadequate appreciation of the social and cultural background of educational work which must be set right.

This brings me to another rather neglected aspect: the curious anomaly which exists between educational ideas and principles theoretically advocated in training colleges and those that actually guide their own work as educational institutions. There is much talk in educational circles—most of all in training institutions—of the 'new education' and of the many ideas and movements woven into its variegated texture: freedom, initiative, leadership, community life, social motivation and the like. Teachers-in-training are expected to assimilate the essence of these ideas by some process of direct intuition from books and then to make them living realities in their own schools. These colleges have, however, failed to apply their favourite principle of Learning by Doing nearer home in their own work. It is impossible to realize the full significance of any important and pregnant conception like freedom or self-activity or cooperative work without an actual experience of working under conditions which they postulate. What we imperatively need is a freeing of these colleges from the strict regimentation and control of teachers' life and activities which has characterized them for decades and their reorganization into free and active 'communities' where teachers would work under the same conditions and stimuli that we desire to establish in our new and progressive schools. Otherwise their teachers, educated and trained in a cramped, unfree environment will tend to perpetuate the vicious circle and carry on the wrong traditions of their own education into their respective schools. In recent years, there has been some change for the better in this respect. The Basic Training Colleges are actually being organized as 'community centres' with cooperative productive work as their basis and even in post-graduate colleges, there is comparatively greater freedom. But the movement has yet to go much further to become truly effective.

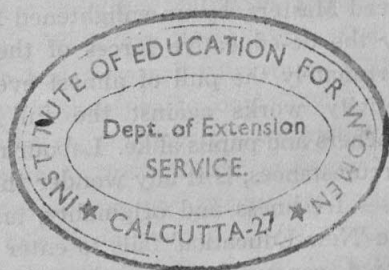
Finally, I should like to refer to an administrative problem of great difficulty which confronts all training colleges: the selection of candidates for training, one aspect of which has been discussed in an earlier chapter. So far the matter has been dealt with very haphazardly and, since the supply of aspiring candidates and trained teachers in the past did not exceed the demand, the situation was not so acute and critical as it is today. Now there is, on the one hand, a much greater rush of candidates to the available training colleges, and, on the other, the openings available are not sufficient to absorb all qualified and trained teachers. The problem of selection, therefore, becomes particularly important in the interests of individuals as well as the teaching profession—particularly in the context of our Five-Year Plans. Our colleges can no longer remain content with a policy of haphazard admissions, trusting to luck to bring about a stable adjustment of demand and supply. They have to ensure, by conscious planning and endeavour, the provision of a steady stream of well-qualified teachers to meet the existing and growing needs of the respective areas. Let us examine briefly the implications of the situation.

It is essential that, in cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction, they should from time to time—say, on a five-year basis—carry out a regional survey of the personnel needs of the schools in the area and plan out their admission policy with reference to the likely demand. To relieve the existing pressure on the available seats, they will have to institute short, intensive courses in teaching for the older and more experienced teachers who are required under the existing rules to receive training but often fail to, or are unwilling to, secure admission in full time courses. By attending such courses, designed not with a view to achieving any theoretical completeness but to give help and guidance where they are most needed, they will add to their professional efficiency and status and will ensure the security of their tenure. For further progress in their professional efficiency, the increased association of training colleges with schools, as postulated above, and the institution of refresher courses will

provide adequate facilities and encouragement. This large section of candidates being thus accounted for, the business of the colleges will be to see that only the most promising and qualified teachers are admitted. For this purpose, it would be necessary to develop a more effective and adequate technique of selection than the rough-and-ready methods at present in vogue. When I speak of 'technique' I do not, of course, mean the devising of any mechanical, fool-proof measuring-stock that will leave out of account the elements of personality and character which are, after all, even more important in this profession than intellectual and scholastic equipment. But it is obviously possible to improve the present haphazard methods of selection so as to gain a fuller idea of the psychological and moral make-up of the intending teachers. To obtain the best possible results, it would be necessary to go further and try to give a professional bias to the university studies of these candidates so as to eliminate the possibility, so common at present, of their coming to the college with the most curious assortment of miscellaneous knowledge, unrelated to the needs of their prospective profession. In a sense, it is true that all knowledge is grist to the teacher's mill but there are, obviously, certain combinations of subjects which are likely to be more helpful than others in the theoretical and practical work of the training college. This vocational bias can be given, partly through a better selection of subjects in the university before coming to the training college and partly, through the introduction of Education as an optional subject for the Degree examination as has been done by some universities already. This will not only be of help to intending teachers but is also intrinsically desirable, as the cultural value of a well-planned two-years' course in education is certainly as great as that in History or Philosophy or any other of the traditional studies.

We can now sum up the situation as it presents itself after this brief analysis. The Training Colleges have failed to pull their full weight for various reasons, some of which are within, and others beyond, their control. The effectiveness of their work in practice is seriously handicapped because they have

no demonstration schools of their own and cannot work out any reliable, well-knit and properly organized technique of teaching. The result is that, when their half-baked teachers are actually face to face with school conditions, which are often very discouraging, they are not able to put the principles they have learnt into practice and soon fall into apathy—and into line—with their played-out colleagues! They often fail to make their students realize that teaching is a *vocation* and to inculcate that broad vision which sees, in the daily routine and drudgery of their work, a creative activity of the highest order—the shaping of a better world through the cultivation of the best in the individuality of every child. Thus the young, well meaning but often imperfectly equipped teacher finds himself beating his head against a stone wall, without either the faith that moves mountains or the disciplined energy which blasts a way through them. How this situation is to be met has been suggested by implication in this chapter and will be discussed in greater detail in the two succeeding chapters.



Chapter XX

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN EDUCATIONAL RENAISSANCE

IT IS comparatively easy—given the gift of clear thinking and imagination—to formulate irreproachable educational aims and objectives or devise promising educational methods and theories. But their day-to-day application to the life and work of children in schools is a task requiring infinite tact, patience, faith, resourcefulness and good humour. For the teacher works with obstinate material: there are the children, who present a bewildering multiplicity of individual differences, each constituting a unique and complicated psychological problem which needs reverent and sympathetic study; there is the school environment which is often discouraging, if not actually depressing, tending to kill joyous enthusiasm by its formalism, its red-tapism, its methods of collective drill. All this is further complicated by unsympathetic or unimaginative Head Masters, by un-enlightened Management, and above all, by the de-educative forces of the modern world where unfortunately the pull of almost every institutional and group-activity works against the full and free development of teachers and pupils alike. Labouring under these unfavourable circumstances, is it any wonder that the average teacher soon loses freshness and originality, and the life-giving breath of the 'New Education' fails to enter into the school? At educational conferences, on the public platforms, and in the University addresses there *are* eloquent pleas for a better education. But while they may win applause, they do not cut much ice in reality. As soon as you come from these fairy lands of talk into the grim realities of schooling, as it actually goes on from day to day in a large majority of Indian schools, you find that they are still plodding along their traditional grooves—as if there were no New Education anywhere on the horizon, as if eventful forces, operating on an international

scale, had not completely transformed the familiar landmarks and boundaries of the world environing them! What shall our teachers do in the face of this challenging and fast developing situation? Should they go on plying their dubious trade in blissful ignorance of, or indifference to, these great and cataclysmic changes, perhaps just adding snippets of new subjects here and there out of deference to wayward public opinion or official pressure? Or, should they seriously consider the impact of these new forces and movements on their own work and practices, mindful of the fact that educational problems and situations are not created *ad hoc* but are the offspring of the wider forces operating in national and international life functioning outside the school and the university? Shall we wait helplessly for them and be caught in their destructive sweep or go out boldly to meet them by putting in order our educational and social system? I submit that this is a situation in which prudence is not the better part of valour but courage the better part of prudence and, since the desired educational reconstruction depends for its success primarily on the quality of the teaching profession that carries it out, we are at once confronted with the question: How shall we equip the teachers for the infinitely responsible part that they will have to play in the educational renaissance? What are the qualities and qualifications—social, academic and personal—that they will need for the successful fulfilment of their professional duties?

It may be helpful to clear one rather common assumption out of the way. With the growth of the scientific movement in education, with its precise techniques and procedures and its apparent objectivity, not only laymen but educationists and psychologists have been betrayed into the belief that it is possible to perfect a fool-proof technique of teaching which any teacher could employ with fool-proof success. The corollary to that rather *naive* assumption is that thinking and creative educational planning could be done once for all by the educational leaders and the average teacher could be divested of this troublesome responsibility. To interpret the process of education in this way, however, is to ignore educational psychology and to miss the entire meaning of this rich and

creative activity. For, the essence of the teaching process is a continuous, meaningful and developing intercourse between the comparatively mature and integrated personality of the teacher and the comparatively unformed, but eagerly receptive and actively creative, personality of the child. Now, this contact, in every individual case, possesses a distinctive and unique quality which no uniform educational theory or methodology can either predict or provide for. Mysterious and varied are the reactions and the responses of the human personality to apparently similar situations and every child has his own particular equipment of emotional and instinctive tendencies which the teacher has sympathetically to study and direct. Who dare devise a yard-stick with which the individualities of all the children could be measured with any reasonable chance of success? And who would presume to forecast the nature of the even more subtle and mysterious process by which one cultured and enriched mind exercises its influence over another? At every step in the educational process there are unexpected problems and situations to be met, maladjustments to be set right, complexes and conflicts to be resolved and misdirected or repressed energies to be utilized into the service of ethical ends. To achieve this aim, the teacher has to be intelligently resourceful and persistent in his sympathetic observation and guidance. It is this elusive, unpredictable element in education which makes the teaching vocation so significant as well as difficult and exacting in its demands on its members. Teachers, who drift to it because they hope to find a comparatively easy life, would be well advised to stay away from it for precisely the same reason! For, on the entrance to this great service are engraved the words, emphatic though invisible: "Abandon slackness all ye that enter here, for it demands a life of devotion and dedication and active intelligence."

Like the other great Arts through which mankind has built up its cultural and intellectual heritage, the art of education also requires a life-long preparation—only more emphatically so, since it is synonymous with growth, both for children and for teachers. And this process should be continuous, unbroken

from their first day of work to the end of their teaching career. The colleges and the universities have a part to play in it before the prospective teacher enters any professional institution; the training colleges have then to provide not only technical equipment but a proper orientation and outlook. When the teacher emerges from there—apparently full-fledged but really only at the threshold of his kingdom—and takes service in any educational institution, he has before him the prolonged and absorbing task of equipping himself creatively and progressively, for the better discharge of his manifold and growing duties. Any attempt to parcel the teacher's life into compartments and devote one of them exclusively to his professional preparation is educational and psychological myopia and we must recognize that we are suffering acutely from this disease at present.

Let us take these three periods one by one and see how each may contribute to the final result. The colleges and the universities should take upon themselves the duty of discovering from amongst their students those who, by their character and temperament as well as their academic and social qualities, seem suited for the teaching profession and it is the duty of the professors to give a professional bias to their choice of studies at the appropriate stage. It reflects discredit on our educational situation and reveals a lack of co-ordination that our higher institutions, which prepare students for the training colleges, take no interest in facilitating a suitable selection. The result is that many of the students who find their way into training institutions are not those whom a sense of vocation has impelled to it, but rather the tired-out and dispirited men and women who have knocked at the doors of many offices and professions—but knocked in vain! It is a great pity that this should be so and that higher education should fail to kindle in the hearts of at least some young men and women a passionate desire to serve their country by dedicating themselves to education as their first love and choice. There can be no improvement in the quality of education imparted in our schools until we can draw upon a better class of teachers whom a social bent of mind, a desire for service and an

appreciation of the possibilities of service implicit in educational work have drawn to the profession and whose education has been so reoriented at the University as to provide the background of technical knowledge and skill for the purpose. This involves also the choice of proper subjects at the Intermediate and Degree level.

Given these teachers, what should the training colleges do? In the preceding pages, I have discussed some aspects of this problem and have advocated that it should aim at widening their interests and appreciation, enlarging their contact with life and giving them a more enriched personality so that they may influence the growth of their pupils healthily. There is, however, another aspect of training college education—as indeed of all higher education—which has been generally neglected in India and which requires constant emphasis. It has been far too isolated from the living streams and movements of the world, having built up its own secluded academic fortress which is often impervious to the new stirrings of thought and activity outside its walls. No educational institution, least of all a teachers' training institution, is justified in maintaining this attitude of aloofness in the face of the stupendous changes which are taking place around us. The growth of physical sciences and the development of industry during the last 150 years have brought into being a new social and economic order in the western world and to a lesser degree in our own country. On account of the development of rapid means of physical and intellectual communication, the impact of these forces on our national life is bound to increase very rapidly, and a free India will naturally strive to avail itself of all that can quicken the processes of national reconstruction. The growth of the biological sciences has revolutionized our entire reading of the history of the human race and given us a new conception of the place and destiny of man in the universe. He has been placed in a new, dynamic and creative relationship towards his physical and social environment. On the one hand, the perfection of scientific and industrial technique has given him immensely increased powers of control for creation and destruction, for service and exploita-

tion. He can make, and has made, ten blades of grass grow where one grew before; he can conquer diseases and prolong life—and has actually done so. He has conquered both space and time and multiplied a hundredfold the possibilities of intellectual and cultural contact between different generations and distant groups. But while this progress has been going on at an accelerated pace, his social and moral consciousness, which is the special province of education in the widest sense, has lagged behind and he has been tempted again and again to use these powers for destructive and selfish ends—for wars and exploitation, for perpetuating social and economic injustices and satisfying his lust for power and wealth at the expense of weaker and less fortunate individuals and groups. In fact, since the awful years of the recent War, the bulk of the scientific man-power of many advanced nations has been mobilized for the production and perfection of the Atom Bomb and other horrors beyond the imagination of the layman. This situation is fraught not only with terrible physical perils for the survival of mankind but also with grave moral and ethical dangers and, unless education is so orientated as to equip the growing generation with a life-philosophy and a social and ethical outlook that will face the facts of this situation decently, it is foredoomed to failure. It requires, on the part of our teacher, an understanding of these forces which form the framework within which he must shape his activity. They are the obstinate raw material which he must somehow press into the service of his triumphant art, transcending them ultimately by releasing the nascent, creative impulses of childhood and youth and associating them with worthy ideals and purposes. He will derive inspiration for these ideals by the vision of a better social order in which the crudities, repressions and injustices of the existing society have been eliminated or, at least, greatly minimized. No attempt to reconstruct education can be successful unless teachers and others have given their earnest thought to the type of society that they desire to evolve and have outgrown the paralysing conservatism which takes everything for granted on the assumption that anything that exists is right or that 'we can

do nothing about it'. The ineffectiveness and impotence of our modern education is largely due to the mental vacuity of the educational thinkers and the teaching profession in this respect; many of the most 'progressive' amongst them are content with superficial educational experiments and patch-works which are no more valuable than the 'energetic futility of a squirrel' dancing in its cage! It is the business of the universities and the training colleges to produce teachers who are intelligently alive to the meaning of these world forces and emotionally sensitive to their impact on human life, for only then can they play their part worthily in the shaping of better men and women and a more just and human social order. This does not necessarily imply—in fact, it does *not* emphatically imply—the indoctrination of teachers and, through them, of children, with certain preconceived social and economic doctrines. But it does demand an orientation of teachers' and children's individual development and thought towards human understanding and social and co-operative values. This emphasis, or bias, or whatever one may like to call it, is implicit in the world situation created by the forces of scientific technology and, if we ignore them now, we will not only miss all its possible benefits in the present but also store up a crop of untold sufferings and conflicts for the future.

Let us finally meet this teacher, whose education and development we have been following through the university and the training college, after he has entered the profession of his choice. It is not part of my argument here to discuss the discouraging conditions which he often meets in schools and to which I have referred already. For the present I shall presume that, thanks to his initial equipment of faith and vision and loyalty, he will be able to keep alive his enthusiasm and efficiency. *These* are, no doubt, pre-requisites for the exercise of his professional activity but, by themselves, they are not enough. More than almost any other technician or craftsman or scholar, he must earnestly continue the life-long process of his own education in the widest sense of the word, because for him educational stagnation would spell profes-

sional death. The enrichment of his personal culture, the broadening of his intellectual interests, the deepening of his social insight and understanding are not only individual gains to him as they would be to anyone else—they are also the most valuable equipment for the education of children. If his function is to interpret the world to them, he must do so ultimately through the mirror of his own mind and outlook and, therefore, anything which adds to the richness and humaneness of his personality is an asset to his educative resources. And how vast, how varied, how literally infinite is the sphere of his life-long education! There are the subjects which he teaches in school, whose boundaries are being daily extended and whose meanings are being radically re-interpreted by scholars and research students and, if he fails to keep pace with the most important and the most considerable of these developments, he is apt to become intellectually a back-number—particularly so in the sciences and the social studies. Then there are his own students, growing every day under his own eyes and providing for him an infinitely promising field for psychological study. Is he interested mainly in intellectual education? He must in that case watch carefully and intelligently the growth of their interests and weave them into the pattern of intellectual habits. Or, is he more interested in moral training and character formation? He must study sympathetically the instincts and impulses which are struggling for expression in their everyday life, now flowering into lovable conduct, now distorted into misbehaviour. Whatever he may be anxious to build, he must build on the solid foundations of an intimate, personal acquaintance with each pupil as an individual. Only then does he rise from the drudgery of the mechanic to the dignity of an artist. But even this does not exhaust the scope of his studies and education. For, there is the teeming world of social forces and phenomena by which he is surrounded and in which he must take part as a citizen and as a man. He must acquaint himself with its tendencies, not only as any ordinary voter or intelligent person would, but more lucidly, more thoroughly; for, is he not engaged in the difficult but absorbing task of interpreting

these forces to his pupils so that they may deal with them justly and successfully in their turn? A teacher who cuts himself adrift from the interests which stir national life and the movements which shape and direct it, subtracts very considerably from his own usefulness, because no amount of mere technical skill can be a substitute for a living contact with national life and a generous enthusiasm for humanity and its concerns. Such a teacher would be fettered by that cloistered conception of education which we have condemned as inherently inadequate and, in modern times, particularly dangerous. It is only by throwing himself whole-heartedly into some worthy causes that the teacher can gain an enlargement of his self and overcome that tendency to exclusion and self-centredness which strongly besets teachers and is apt to make many of them feel out-of-place and uncomfortable, if not actually ridiculous, in the contacts of social life. He can also, by such participation in the affairs of the community, overcome, in his own experience, the gap which exists today between the educated and the uneducated classes, a gap which constitutes the most serious indictment of our educational system. In due course, by the personal example and influence of a better teaching personnel on the growing generation, it may also be possible to bridge this gulf more generally and bring about that sharing of life and interests which is at once an evidence of cultural unity and a requisite condition for political strength.

In looking over what I have been writing, the question occurs to me: Have I made demands on the teaching profession which are impossible of realization? I wonder. The answer, as I see it, is both Yes and No. If the teachers interpret their work narrowly, as concerned with instruction in certain subjects, these demands are obviously too exacting and such a conception will certainly not provide the energy and the motive force for the arduous personal and social equipment for which I have pleaded. If, on the other hand, their conception of educational work is identical with what underlies my argument then indeed the demands are not only reasonable but inevitable. For a teacher who sets out con-

sciously on a pilgrimage towards social and educational reconstruction, no dedication is too exacting, no equipment too arduous. He would not look for a life of ease or slackness or mere routine activity. He would be prepared to equip himself with all relevant knowledge, academic and psychological, which may illumine his path; he will throw himself into the study of, and participation in, social life and movements which will give him and his work their right bearings. And thus, armed with knowledge, wisdom and sympathy and the vision of a better world, he will go forth in the pursuit of an ideal which may never be wholly realized but will always urge him forward. Nor will he lack the energy requisite for this Herculean task, for whenever men have thrown themselves wholeheartedly and selflessly in the service of great causes, they have discovered unsuspected reserves of strength and enthusiasm in the depths of their own being. And what greater cause can there be to challenge the best that is in teachers than this, that they should struggle persistently to lead the world out of the chaos and misery and suicidal conflicts in which it is caught up today and work as the architects of a more just and harmonious and a better integrated society than the one in which they find themselves and their fellow-men at present?

Chapter XXI

TEACHERS AND THEIR WORLD*

IT IS always a welcome opportunity for an educational administrator to come into contact with teachers and to participate in their deliberations. Persons like me, who have to deal with problems of educational administration and to worry themselves over files, are exposed to the danger of losing vitalizing contact with teachers and their everyday activities, difficulties and aspirations. I have, therefore, always tried to guard against this danger by welcoming chances of establishing personal contact and sharing my ideas with them and profiting from their suggestions and criticisms. I realize how intimately educational theory and practice are connected with each other and that no one who draws up educational schemes and plans can afford to ignore—except at grave risk—the light that practical experience and field work throw on educational theories and principles. The good teacher—and I believe the same thing applies to the good inspector and administrator—is, to my way of thinking, a person who is constantly enquiring and experimenting, who does not blind himself helplessly and inexorably to a particular routine or method, who keeps his mind open, who examines his practice in the light of theory and tests his theory on the touchstone of practice. To him no educational system or method is acceptable which does not respond sensitively to the needs and the psychology of the children and the best ideals of the community. In defining the good teacher and the good educational officer in these words, I am no doubt placing before you a high and difficult target but it is only by approximating closer to this ideal, through work done with moral and intellectual integrity, that we can expect to make some contribution to the national educational effort. All my life, I have been looking for such teachers and

* Inaugural Address at the Secondary Teachers' Conference, Bijapur.

officers and, although I cannot say that I have found many who came up to this standard, I have always discovered a few such fine spirits wherever I have worked and I have counted myself fortunate in having them as colleagues. Whenever I go to any teachers' meetings and conferences I say to myself: "Perchance, I may come across here a few—even one or two—teachers of this calibre and it will be a privilege to make their acquaintance and to see or know about their work. Or, if that is not possible, it may be that some halting words of mine will strike a spark in the hearts of a few teachers and thus help them to discover themselves and the nature and significance of their work." For, is it not true that sometimes we go on doing a job of work for years in a lifeless, humdrum manner—like carrying an unwelcome burden—and then, suddenly, some unexpected light falls on it from a new angle, illuminating the whole panorama and we see it with new eyes and approach it in a new spirit? "In the flash of a lightning, sometimes, can this road be traversed; but we, who know not, go on looking interminably for the candle and the lamp!"

I want you to approach your problems in a new spirit. You are all teaching in various types of secondary schools and these schools have their special objectives and problems which you must try to understand—not only with your minds but with your hearts. You have to ask yourselves, each one of you, questions like the following: For what purpose am I educating these children? What part are they going to play in the life of their country and the world? What are the forces that are re-shaping this world today and which will come to their full fruition when they grow up into adult citizens? What are the qualities of mind and personality that they will require in order to make a good job of their life? What is, consequently, the reorientation which must be given to their education on this account? True, you cannot answer these questions unaided and you need not *all* answer them individually. But it is important that you should know that these questions have to be faced and answered. It is important that you should *raise* these questions and then study their answers in the writings and thoughts of great educationists and

educational thinkers, past and present. If we study them intelligently and carefully—and how many of us study anything at all, I wonder!—we shall be able to see the general outlines of the replies, and the direction in which we must look for the values for which we have to strive. And into this outline have we to pour the riches of our individual experience; along this direction have we to turn our unsteady steps, translating these values into educational procedures and techniques. Put in these words, perhaps the objectives may strike you as remote and even rhetorical. But I put it to you, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, that, unless you envisage your educational task in these terms, you are only playing with the superficial fringe of the problem and not tackling the great and urgent issues which are astir in the field of children's education. Let me try and elucidate my point of view in more concrete terms.

The first question I have suggested for your thoughtful consideration is: For what purpose am I educating my children? To be able to answer this question intelligently, you have to take with it the two allied questions: What part are they going to play in the life of their country and the world? And, since this life is not static but changing and developing, you will also have to ask yourselves: What are the new forces, political, social, economic and cultural, that are re-shaping our life and of which education has to take serious cognizance? Let us ponder over these allied questions for a moment. In thinking over the purposes of education, at *any* stage, let us try to get rid of the idea that the teachers' main objective—as well as the students'—is the passing of a certain prescribed examination. It sounds like a platitude to say so but unfortunately, so far as *practice* is concerned, a large majority of teachers acts on the assumption that the most important, if not the only, purpose of the school was to enable its students to pass the annual and the final examinations. Now, this tradition is so deep-rooted and is so old that it cannot be easily and quickly eradicated. But the sooner we can really start thinking of education not in the context of books and lessons and curricula and examinations but in

the context of life and its great purposes, the greater is the chance of our retrieving the educational system from its present futility. All these things, which constitute the paraphernalia and the devices of education are, of course, important in their proper place. But let us not confuse the means with the end. They are the *means*, the *instruments* through which education is to be imparted; they do not represent the *end-product* that we should keep in view. The end is the education of the child's *whole* personality—his mind, his body, his emotions, his attitudes—so that he may acquire easy and confident mastery over the powers and capacities with which Providence has gifted him, and he may be able to utilize them in the service of his fellow-men. In other words, we are really engaged in the significant effort of training the child's individuality *in its social context*. During this process he acquires knowledge of various subjects like science, history, languages; he acquires useful skills like reading, writing, drawing, painting and carpentry; he learns many good habits and manners and, of course, he passes certain tests and examinations which indicate that he has successfully acquired the requisite knowledge and skills. But these are all valuable to the degree that they enrich his personality or add to his social efficiency. If the knowledge that he has acquired remains a tax on the memory and the skills that he has learnt are not pressed into service of worthy purposes—if, in other words, they do not pass into his life and character—they cannot be regarded as genuinely educative. The acid test of all that is taught and learnt at school is: how far has it modified the student's outlook and conduct and oriented it in a desirable direction? Not merely what he *knows* but how he *feels* and what he *does* determine the quality of his education. So, in organizing and assessing your work from day to day, you should be constantly asking yourself how your teaching and the children's learning are reacting on their conduct and personality and whether, as a result of their school experience, they are becoming better individuals and better citizens. Perhaps I may illustrate the difference between this approach to the appraisal of education and the traditional approach by means

of an illustration. The orthodox, traditionally minded teacher would define an 'educated person' in terms of what he knows of languages or social studies or science or art or, what is even worse, in terms of what examinations he has passed. He will judge his students also according to the same criteria. I would like you to contrast this with a threefold criterion which was suggested by a well-known English educationist, S. H. Wood, whom some of you may recall as co-author of the Abbott-Wood Report on Technical Education in India. He said once that an educated person is one who can answer the following three questions in the affirmative:

Firstly, *Can he entertain a new idea?* This implies mental alertness and receptivity—a mind that is not closed and hide-bound but open to new ideas and suggestions, able to examine them critically but with tolerance, and prepared to modify his views and belief on the basis of tested evidence. I suggest to you, as an interesting exercise in psychology, to judge people whom we know, including some of the most important persons of your acquaintance, from this point of view and see how far they satisfy this very first condition of being educated persons. Do they welcome a new idea when they come across it or turn round on their heels when they see it coming round the corner? As teachers, you should be on your guard against training credulous, uncritical or fanatical minds who may first unintelligently accept an idea and then resist the incursion of all new ideas that do not fall into line with it. Such a mind is both an intellectual and a moral menace to society—particularly a society which is composed of people of different colours, creeds, races and languages.

Secondly, *Can he entertain the other fellow?* Just as the first condition is an *intellectual* quality, the second is *social*: the capacity to be able to get on pleasantly with one's fellows, to cooperate with them in common purposes, to feel that one's individuality unfolds itself best, *not* in isolation, but through social contacts and in the fellowships of common effort. Any person, who lacks this quality of interest in and love for his fellow human beings, who cannot share in their joys and sorrows, is educationally incomplete, however highly

educated he may be in the conventional sense.

Thirdly, *Can he entertain himself?* which is a measure of the quality of an individual's *personal* culture. In this age of ours, which is so glutted with machine-made amusements, occupations and avocations, most people have lost the capacity to find any pleasure in their own company. If they have any leisure, they have no internal resources of culture or ideas or interests with which they may be able to entertain themselves. They want an *escape* from self—some in sport or watching sport, some in the cinema or other forms of mechanized amusement, some in drink, some in playing cards, some in gossip and some in reading any third-rate stuff which may come their way! Some of these things are good in their own place, but when they take the place of creative living, creative thinking and creative enjoyment, when they are looked upon as a refuge from the empty dreariness of one's own company, there is something seriously wrong with education. It has obviously failed to reveal to the individual the infinite variety of possibilities inherent in human personality and it becomes necessary to look into the basis of our educational theory and practice.

This is just an illustration of how one intelligent educator, who envisages education in relation to life, may visualize his objectives—not in narrow curricular terms but in terms of the life that lies ahead of his children. There is another consideration which you should keep in mind in this connection. It is not enough to relate school work to adult objectives—namely, what is the child going to do or to be when he grows up? You must also think of the child as he is today—his instincts, his interest, his urge to self-expression, his need for fellowship, his innate yearning towards beauty, his desire to know, his response to goodness. Now, what *does* that mean, precisely, in relation to the actual day-to-day activities and organization of the school work? It postulates that the schools must be freed from the narrow, academic tradition that has gained a strangle-hold over them and they must be transformed into a dynamic *communities* which will provide a full and rich and satisfying life for the child. Only then can they develop all

sides of his nature; only then can they enlist his interest and loyalty and protect him against the danger of being exploited by undesirable political cliques, masquerading as youth organizations. Secondary Education will have to be more broad-based, utilizing the educational possibilities of a wider variety of subjects and activities than is the case at present—arts and crafts, agriculture, commerce, technical subjects. They are all different keys which can unlock the minds of different types of students—who do not all respond uniformly to the same approach and the same set of subjects—and, through them, the school can interpret to them the vast and varied panorama of the world around. But it is essential that all these, as well as the traditional subjects, should be taught in a dynamic manner so that they may open new windows on the world and may add to their mental and practical efficiency or appreciation. My complaint is that even these so-called cultural subjects are taught today in such a formal and lifeless manner that they do not impinge on the character and personality of the children. History remains an uninteresting chronicle of dates and names and unconnected events instead of being a means of quickening the social conscience or creating a sense of shared responsibility and tempered optimism. Literature does not humanize or awaken the social sense or quicken aesthetic sensibility—it is usually a study of words, phrases, facts about authors' lives and an unassimilated jargon of literary criticism. Science teaching is carried on even more inadequately—it gives technical knowledge at best and only some technical terms and formulas at the worst. There is no appreciation of how science has changed, and is constantly changing, the pattern of our life and thought, how it has created new political, social and economic problems which need to be studied and understood. And is it not a measure of our low intellectual standards that most teachers believe that basic problems like these are beyond the mental grasp of students in their adolescence? But that is really a confession of their own failure to present these living issues to students in an interesting and intelligible manner. In a really progressive and living school, education will centre round the

study of such problems and the various 'subjects' will be utilized as the need arises, for throwing light on them. This links them into a unity and invests them with real meaning for the children. To show that what I am asking is not a utopian dream, I may mention to you only one example of a school—out of many—where education was envisaged in these terms. I do not know whether many of you have heard of a great English Head Master—Sanderson of the Oundle Public School—who died about 15 years ago. You will find a fascinating account of his educational ideas and activities in two books—one written by H. G. Wells called "The Story of a Great School Master" and the other by his school colleagues under the title "Sanderson of Oundle". As you read these books, you can almost see how, under his inspiring and revolutionary leadership, the walls dividing the various school subjects crumbled down one after another and how, through the breaches made, life came surging in triumphantly, changing the patterns of thought and action in the children as well as the teachers. Now, I am aware of the many difficulties and handicaps under which you work, including the discouraging economic situation, and I know how hard it is to do such things under these circumstances. But there is one suggestion which teachers should always bear in mind: "Strive by all means to improve your prospects; for, there is no doubt that every community, and every State, which wishes to ensure its future, must give a decent deal to its teachers. But remember that, having entered the teaching profession, you cannot *make conditions with life*; you cannot make good work, creative work, progressive work contingent on your economic needs being adequately satisfied. You must strive to build your schools into fine institutions where you might, in the striking phrase of Jesus Christ, 'give life and give it abundantly.'" And it may even be that the creation of such schools may itself become the most irresistible argument for society showing you the honour and the consideration which you deserve. In any case, nothing great has ever been achieved without cultivating something of the quality of *Nishkam*, work for the love of work, unmixed with desire and unmindful of rewards.

I would like to add a few words about the other question which I have invited you to consider—namely, what are the landmarks of the world in which you are living and what are the forces that are re-shaping it and with reference to which you have to determine your educational objectives and technique? This is a very complicated and extensive question which I have already discussed from different angles elsewhere. I shall, therefore, content myself here with making one or two illustrative observations. You realize, I am sure, that the world in which we are living is changing very fast and, in our own country, far-reaching and revolutionary changes have come about during the life-time of a single generation. Mahatma Gandhi has given a new turn and a new acceleration to the historical process and thanks to him, we have succeeded in attaining our political freedom, with all its attendant possibilities and responsibilities. But we are not yet adjusted to the new situation emotionally and intellectually; we have yet to build up the moral and social qualities which the new order requires. And this is an *educational* problem in the widest sense of the word. All types of schools—primary and secondary—colleges, universities, cultural organizations, thinkers and writers, the press and the platform, the film and the radio have to cooperate in carrying it out. I cannot refer at the moment to the part which other institutions and agencies can play in this field but must invite you, as teachers of secondary schools, to ponder over what *you* should and can do. You have to picture the general socio-political background of your work. We are trying to build up in India a secular, democratic State, embracing over 300 million persons belonging to different races, religions and cultural levels. We have emerged from a period of political and intellectual slavery which has, amongst other things, divided our country into many discordant and conflicting groups. Our educational, cultural and economic standards are still extremely low. A great deal of reconstruction in all fields will have to be carried out within the next few years. What *can* education do in this context? A great deal, provided we can get the right type of teachers, imbue them with the right ideology and

outlook and provided, further, that the State makes adequate resources available for the purpose. Let me assume that these two conditions are fulfilled—it is a big assumption but I am making it to simplify the argument. Our teachers must then orient their education in such a way that we shall weld the various elements of our people into a unity without dragooning them in a rigid uniformity. The schools must try to strengthen in all children a consciousness of their Indian nation-hood, but this concept should be broad and tolerant enough to welcome differences. Such unity will be all the more real because it will recognize their individual as well as group differences. It is natural to have differences and they should be respected, provided they are not made the occasion for quarrels and conflicts. We shall also have to relate our national loyalty to the demands of this inter-related 'one world' in which we are living. We shall have to equip our students mentally and socially in such a way that they may take an active part in the great project of national reconstruction which calls for a keen sense of social service and the highest standards of efficiency, intellectual as well as practical. On the side of the methods, and curricula, all that we do must lead to the raising of intellectual standards and giving children better training for active participation in life. This life includes many things but its central factor is work. Any education which fails to give children the desire as well as the capacity to work with efficiency and integrity is anti-social. On the side of social and moral discipline, we shall have to use all our greatly increased knowledge of child psychology to strengthen the sense of interdependence between the individual and the group and to sharpen their feeling for social justice. These will be our *objectives*. Practical methods to achieve them are a matter of research and experimentation which will need the sincere, life-long effort of generations of teachers. May it be given to our generation to take a leading part in this great educational and national crusade!

Appendix

AN EXPERIMENT IN SOCIAL TRAINING

(Labour Week in Kashmir Schools)

INTRODUCTION

MANY attempts have been made in recent years, with varying degrees of success, to give a new orientation to education, particularly with the object of bringing it nearer to life and breaking down the academic exclusiveness in which the school is apt to lose its main *raison d'être* and purpose. One such attempt was made in the State of Jammu and Kashmir during the years 1939-45. The report of this interesting and valuable experiment, published in Kashmir for the information of local educational workers, aroused considerable interest at the time. I, therefore, republished it on behalf of the Bombay Educational Department so as to bring it to the notice of a larger circle of readers. Then the Education Clearing House of Unesco, desiring to bring the experiment to the notice of an international audience, published it in its Quarterly Bulletin of Fundamental Education. In view of this evidence of interest, I have decided to publish it here.

I feel strongly that, not only in this country but in the whole world, we have to make an earnest and concentrated effort to give a new orientation to the social ideology of our children and youth, particularly in the direction of inculcating a sense of the dignity of labour and cultivating the capacity to work together for constructive and socially worthy causes. I cannot think of any better method of doing so than by bringing all school children together into a fellowship of work and service where the 'meanest' work will be undertaken in a spirit of adventure and comradeship because it is useful and provides a healthy outlet for their energies and talents. This

is, I believe, the idea underlying the approach adopted by that excellent organization 'The International Voluntary Service for Peace'. Of course, it is not suggested that the programme we worked out can, or need be, followed in its entirety in all schools, as conditions differ greatly from country to country and the merit of such an experiment lies precisely in the planning and spontaneity which it evokes in the teachers and pupils of every school. They can study their special needs and circumstances as well as the conditions of the environment and then decide what types of work can be undertaken usefully. It is necessary, however, that the programme drawn up should fulfil the following conditions:

1. It should provide for real labour and manual work, suited to the ages of the children, so that they may actually achieve something worthwhile at the end of the week.
2. It should lend itself to cooperative activity so that children may work in groups and thus learn, through practice, the habits of discipline and qualities of leadership.
3. It should be varied and carefully planned so that the tens of thousands of children participating in it may all find something worthwhile to do and waste of time—merely 'playing' at work—is avoided. This will be facilitated if the programme includes work inside the school as well as outside—community sanitation, help in field operations, hospital visiting, constructional activities, etc.
4. In order to exploit the educational possibilities of this Labour Week project attempts should be made to link up the work done with the school academic programme, thereby vitalizing reading, writing, arithmetic and other subjects.

I know that in many countries a great deal of similar work has been done—on a much bigger scale and better organized—than has been possible in India. This account is published

mainly with the object of acquainting educational workers in other countries with how one modest project was carried out under rather difficult conditions and the measure of success that attended our efforts.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE EXPERIMENT

As the Director of Education in the State of Jammu and Kashmir between 1938 and 1945, I was charged with the responsibility of reorganizing the educational system of the State and, thanks to a number of earnest and capable teachers and colleagues and a helpful administration, a fair measure of success was achieved in this project. My object in this brief report is to give an account of one rather interesting and educationally significant experiment which was tried in all the State schools during this period. The later developments that have taken place in the educational field, and the newer trends that have come into prominence since, give this experiment a deeper significance than I could have anticipated for it at the time.

The educational reorganization that we undertook aimed not only at the improvement of the curriculum, the methods and the technique of education but also at inculcating a new social and moral ideology in the boys and girls at school. One of the most serious and universal complaints against the existing system of education in India has been that it tends to create a gap between the world of school and the world outside the school, to alienate the educated classes from the rest of the people and to instil in some of them a sense of social snobbery which makes them look down upon manual labour as somehow beneath their dignity and regard all manual labourers as belonging to an inferior class of human beings. There is a good deal of truth in this criticism and this unfortunate situation not only corrupted the mentality of the educated classes but also made education somewhat superficial, unreal and confined to textbooks and the teaching of academic subjects.

We discussed this situation from all points of view and worked out several schemes—including a revision of the Social Studies syllabus, the introduction of an 'activity period' in all classes, the encouragement of craft work, etc.—which may give a more dynamic orientation to school education. Amongst the schemes considered was one for the celebration annually of a 'Labour Week' in schools, during which all children will be relieved of the ordinary school work and take up various kinds of manual work and social service in and outside the school and thus 'learn through doing' the lesson of social service and honourable toil. After considering all aspects of the proposal, we decided to give it a trial and for six years, beginning in 1939 when it was first tried, this 'Labour Week' continued to be a regular feature of school education in the State.

In deciding to celebrate such a week in all the primary and secondary schools of the State, we had before us the objective of giving a new orientation to the children's minds on the social and moral value of manual work and providing for them varied opportunities of active social service on behalf of their own schools and the local community. Many of the educational workers whom we consulted were convinced that a large majority of children would respond joyously to such a project, as it would enable them to exercise their creative and constructive powers and to labour together on behalf of common causes and purposes. It was, however, doubtful whether the parents and the general public would welcome a movement which might strike the unimaginative outsider as an unnecessary waste of time, as taking students away from their books to a type of work which could as well be left to labourers, coolies, masons and scavengers. But we felt that the attempt was worth making and this significant experiment in educating the social conscience of the students could not be abandoned merely because there was a likelihood of some ill-informed opposition.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

So we started the work, mentally prepared to encounter a certain measure of opposition. It is, however, a pleasure to record that after the first year, there was remarkably little opposition amongst the parents and often those who 'came to scoff remained to pray'. In many cases, the parents, caught up by the movement, joined their children in the work of school repairs and decorations or of cleaning up the town or the village. The credit for this achievement must go partly to the teachers who went about their work with tact and good sense, disarming opposition, and partly to the spirit of the age which had already worn down the long existing prejudice against manual work. I was told by some people, well acquainted with past conditions in the State, that such an experiment would have created a furore, if not a riot, even a couple of decades ago.

HOW WE SET ABOUT THE WORK

As a first step, a conference of educational officials was convened in Jammu where the objects underlying the experiment were discussed and elucidated, and the proposals and suggestions made were thrashed out. It was impressed on all the members present that they should not take up this project mechanically, as if the students and teachers were carrying out some work externally imposed on them by the Department. The ideology of productive work and social service underlying the celebration of the Labour Week and the value of cultivating a sense of kinship with their fellow-workers in the field and the farm should be brought home to the students so that they may participate in the experiment with understanding and joy. It was further pointed out that the success of the scheme depended, above all, on a careful planning of the work to be done after a due scrutiny of the means and resources at the disposal of each school. In the case of big schools in particular, where a large number of students

had to be kept fruitfully occupied for six or seven days, there were many loopholes for maladjustment and waste of time and effort, and planning was absolutely necessary for success. Moreover, it is a great educative experience in itself to plan out work on a cooperative basis so as to eliminate waste and utilize varied individual talents and capacities for the achievement of a common purpose. After the conference, the following brief circular was issued by the Director of Education to all Inspecting Officers and Headmasters who were responsible for organizing this week in their respective spheres:

'I am writing this to invite your attention to the project of the "Labour Week" which is proposed to be organized in the schools of the Province. I consider the successful organization of this week to be a matter of the greatest significance from the educational point of view and, therefore, request you to give your careful attention to the details of the work which is to be done during this period. If a carefully considered programme is drawn up beforehand and the willing and enthusiastic cooperation of the students is obtained by explaining to them the objectives underlying this work, it will not only have great social and moral value, but it can also be correlated with academic work. So far as its social and moral values are concerned, they lie in the fact that it brings the school into close relationship with the envioning life of the community and gives the school children an opportunity of taking part in constructive work and service, thereby making them—as well as the members of the local community—realize the identity of their interests. Moreover, if students are asked to prepare regular reports of the work done by them and to take pride in the improvement of their school and their village or town, they will acquire a new interest in the success and efficiency of the school and learn to devote themselves more readily to any reading, writing or practical work which may be correlated with this activity.

I shall be glad to receive in due course, reports of the

work done under you in this connection and particularly to find out the reaction of the parents and other people to this experiment.'

THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Inspectors of Schools convened meetings of Headmasters and inspecting officers under them with the object of discussing matters of detail and the following outline programme was drawn up to guide the teachers all over the province:

- (1) White-washing of the classrooms;
- (2) Mud plastering of the school roofs wherever necessary;
- (3) Cleaning and improvement of the school rooms, verandas, compounds, gardens and playgrounds;
- (4) Repairs to the compound walls or fencing;
- (5) Cleaning up of the furniture in the laboratory, the library and other rooms, and varnishing it, if funds permit;
- (6) School decoration—preparation of charts and pictures, stencilling of suitable mottoes, etc.;
- (7) Improving the school approaches, e.g. filling up of depressions and removing obstacles;
- (8) Improvement of public roads—filling up of depressions and cess pools, clearing of drains, etc. in the school locality; and
- (9) Improving the school lawn by turfing.

The Chief Engineer (P. W. D.) kindly agreed to the request that, in the case of all schools for which some annual repair grants were sanctioned—and these were usually very small amounts—the cost of the materials purchased by schools for ordinary repairs, and white-washing, etc. should be met out of these grants. This enabled the schools to carry out their programme without incurring any expenditure out of their limited funds and it was also a source of economy to the Public Works Department. The Education Department also

secured the cooperation of Municipality and Town Area authorities and borrowed from their stock such implements and tools as they could supply. In some cases other Departments, e.g. the Medical Department, also cooperated in carrying out a cleanliness campaign in towns and villages. It is a noteworthy feature of the experiment that hardly any additional expenditure was incurred. It is necessary to stress this point because financial reasons are always pleaded as an excuse whenever any such project is proposed for adoption.

When the experiment was first tried, there were many instances in which proper and adequate planning could not be done; it was found particularly difficult to engage simultaneously all the students of the school in systematic work and to supervise it effectively. But, gradually, as more experience was gained it was possible to avoid waste of time and effort. An attempt was made, within the general framework of the instructions issued, to elicit proposals and suggestions from the students themselves as to the kind of work which should be done both in and outside the school. We held that the educative usefulness and success of such an experiment depended primarily on the intelligent and willing cooperation of the students, and that it was the business of teachers to help them to realize that they were participating in a significant and freely chosen activity of great social value.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS

From the report received in the very first year, it was found that the following kind of work was done by the students in Primary, Middle and High Schools all over the State:

- (1) Cleaning, white-washing, repairing and decorating the school buildings, furniture, lawns, grounds and surroundings.
- (2) Removing stones, glass, iron nails, etc. from the lanes and streets.
- (3) Cleaning up watering places like springs and ponds,

and helping to dig wells.

- (4) Constructing bridges over small drains and streams to facilitate communication.
- (5) Filling pits in the streets and lanes, clearing and repairing roads, repairing dangerously slippery hill slopes.
- (6) Organizing bathing centres for slum children and first aid centres for the public.
- (7) Teaching adults to write their names.
- (8) Improving drainage of selected localities and drying marshy land created by open drains.
- (9) Turfing school compounds.
- (10) Propaganda amongst the public regarding the importance of personal cleanliness and social sanitation in order to ward off common diseases; use of manure pits: learning the use of modern agricultural methods and implements. This was done through practical demonstrations as well as through organized processions in the course of which teachers and students delivered speeches, sang songs and arranged other programmes.

In order to give a concrete idea of the scope of work accomplished and to show that concerted effort and activity can achieve great results, a few of the projects actually carried out by some of the schools are listed below:

- (1) Putting up a solid stone wall $150' \times 2\frac{1}{2}' \times 3'$ around the school garden.
- (2) Construction of bridges over 'nullahs' (streams) which had made it difficult for children to attend school.
- (3) Construction of latrines for the school.
- (4) Cleaning up a large plot of land adjacent to the school to make a playing ground and cutting down tall bushes where snakes used to shelter.
- (5) Setting up of centres where babies were given daily baths.
- (6) Planning and construction of model kitchens.
- (7) Construction of a fair-weather, thatched 'reading room'.

- (8) Social service work in the hospitals.
- (9) Constructing a mud wall round a mosque.
- (10) Cleaning of sulphur springs which had been dirty for decades and become a source of disease and infection.
- (11) Construction of a channel to bring water to the school garden.
- (12) Construction of a hut to store sports material with the open trunk of a magnificent *Chinar* tree as its interior.

During this week teachers and students carried on intensive propaganda in favour of better sanitation and Adult Education, carrying placards, holding meetings and singing songs to persuade people to join adult education centres. Camp fires were organized in the evening to provide welcome relaxation to students and afford them opportunities for self-expression in the form of dramas, games, humorous skits and other spontaneous activities. In Srinagar and some other places, students addressed representations to the Municipalities or the Town Area Committees inviting their attention to the insanitary and unhygienic conditions which they had noticed in the course of their cleanliness crusades and requested them to take steps to bring about necessary improvements.

THE APPRAISAL

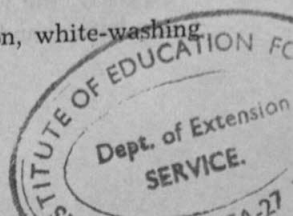
On the whole, from my personal inspection as well as from reports that came to me, I felt convinced that the week's work not only provided a most valuable training for students in social service and cooperative endeavour but also gave them a pleasant and enjoyable time, which is usually not associated with school work in India. They had opportunities of repairing and white-washing their school buildings, improving school room decoration and furniture, planting gardens and lawns and, in some cases, actually constructing small structures. To the growing child and the adolescent, there can be no greater joy than in the thought: '*This is my school because I have made it with the labour of my hands*'. It gives them a new attach-

ment and affection towards the school which is no longer an alien thing but something created by their joint effort. It brings the teachers and their pupils into a new companionship of shared service and enables the former to appreciate individual differences and capacities amongst the children. Above all, it brings them both into close relationship with the local community which sees them labouring for its sake and not infrequently, their surprised scepticism is transformed into spontaneous appreciation and desire for participation. At one place I found boys and local shopkeepers working shoulder to shoulder to clean up not only the roads and bazaars but shops which, in some cases, had not had such cleaning and scrubbing and fastidious care bestowed on them within living memory. If our schools can thus develop in a practical manner the sense of social service and social solidarity between the people and the school children, they will become real centres of education.

At the conclusion of the Labour Week, the following circular was issued by the Director's Office to all teachers and inspecting officers:

"The Labour Week was celebrated in all the State and aided schools throughout the Province of Kashmir from 12th June to 19th June. The object of this new educational experiment was to awaken in all the teachers and students a keen sense of the dignity of labour and to utilize their talents, energy and manpower for the service of the schools and of the local community. I was glad to notice that teachers and students alike responded to the suggestion with spontaneous enthusiasm, and no one—not even the "highest born"—showed any hesitation or unwillingness in handling the most difficult and unpalatable tasks of manual labour. The public also, as a whole, welcomed the scheme. There were a few critics but most of these were reassured after discussing the matter with teachers or the students. The activities of the Labour Week fell into two categories:

- (a) those relating to the repair, decoration, white-washing



- and colour washing of the rooms, repair of furniture, improvement of roads and gardens in the schools; and
- (b) those which aimed at cleaning up the city or village and rendering other forms of social service. The latter included the cleaning up of specific Mohallas (areas) assigned to each school, improving of bathing ghats and drainage of streets, helping the people in cleaning up their own compounds and houses, laying out small vegetable or flower gardens, writing suitable mottoes on the walls, visiting hospitals, etc.

The above list does not exhaust the various activities carried out. Some schools showed considerable ingenuity and resourcefulness in building walls and latrines, constructing store rooms and reclaiming flooded plots of land.

I trust that, in years to come, the scope of Labour Week activities will be further extended and, profiting by our experience of this year, we shall organize it still more effectively and make the public realize that the schools are prepared and willing to play their part in the improvement of civic life. Whenever and wherever there is a difficult job of work to be done which is likely to be of help to people generally, our students will take it up in a spirit of service and adventure, happy in the belief that by undertaking to do it they are educating themselves truly through socially useful productive labour. To the people of the State I should like to convey the assurance that the Department will make this Week a regular feature of its annual activities, and will endeavour to educate the growing generation to appreciate the ideals of social service and the dignity of labour so that they may develop into self-respecting, resourceful, cooperative and broad-minded citizens.

In reviewing the Labour Week, as a whole, there are a few points which I would request all teachers and inspecting officers to bear in mind in order to derive the maximum educational, social and moral value from this project.

Firstly, the work requires careful planning and organization beforehand not by the teachers only but by the teachers

and students in collaboration. This is necessary for two reasons. It provides extremely useful training for the students in carrying out cooperative projects intelligently and adjusting existing resources to purposeful objectives. It obviates the risk of waste of effort and slackness on the part of some students, which is almost certain to occur if careful forethought has not been given to this matter.

Secondly, every year the underlying objectives of this work should be re-impressed on the students and their reactions to it carefully watched. They should not feel that they are merely carrying out a routine activity, but that they are placing their talents and capacities at the service of their school and community, and that life can have no higher aim and no better fulfilment than that of service.

Thirdly, an attempt should be made in future to connect those activities more closely with the ordinary academic work of the school. There are many ways of doing so—asking groups of boys to prepare reports of the work done by them; using some of the experience gained as composition themes in class; calculations of cost of repairs; preparing short reports of 'Social Surveys' carried out in the town or village. Composition work, in particular, done against such a background acquires a vividness and spontaneity not usually associated with writing exercises in schools.

Fourthly, the quality of the manual work and repairs, etc. done by the students should gradually improve and they should begin to realize that anything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well and that, like Carlyle's carpenter, with every stroke of the spade or the hammer, one could either break or strengthen the Ten Commandments. If it is necessary to secure, for this purpose, the service of some mason or carpenter or painter as an adviser, there should be no hesitation in doing so.

In the end, it only remains for me to express my appreciation and gratitude once again to all the students and teachers and inspecting officers who responded magnificently to this call of service and, without any special funds or

training, carried it out with success. Who knows but that this small and modest beginning might become the nucleus of a State-wide movement for introducing some form of compulsory social service for all classes of people, particularly for school and college students, whose manpower may be utilized for a period of six months to one year for grappling with the numerous problems of illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, disease, lack of sanitation and social intolerance which disfigure our national life? This has been done and is being done in other countries and there is no reason why our country should lag behind. If conscription is permissible for purposes of war, why should it be ruled out of court for purposes of peaceful social service and reconstruction?"

This was the review that I wrote after the first year's experience. The work continued during the next five years with increasing success and stability, and I have no hesitation in saying that it did contribute something to vitalizing school education and gave the school children of all classes and creeds the sense of belonging to a community. Sometimes in moments of pardonable optimism, I have the feeling that perhaps the training and impress received by these youngsters in the early forties may have had something to do with the fine example of communal peace and cooperation which the youth of Kashmir put up in the late forties.

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